PAINTERS OF PAKISTAN

S. Amjad Ali

NOT TO BE ISSUED

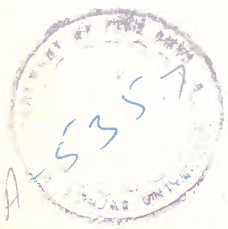
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FOREWORD

M. M. USMANI

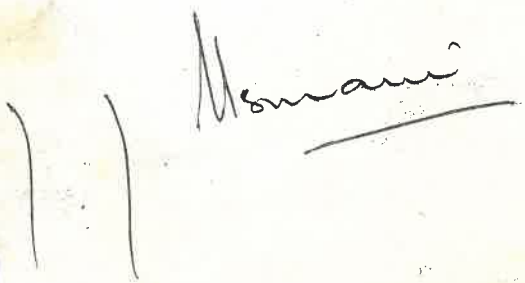
Former Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan

Syed Amjad Ali's book "Painters of Pakistan" is a comprehensive if not a monumental work on the contribution of Pakistani painters to art. He has traced the development of art in Pakistan from 3000 BC through the Indus Valley Civilization right up to the present times. This is perhaps the only continuous account which not only describes our rich heritage of the distant past but gives very detailed information and assessment of the work being created in present day Pakistan. Other books have been published on the subject of Pakistani art but Syed Amjad Ali has written in some depth and has shown how the work of each artist has evolved over time. This is because he has observed the whole process diligently since the advent of independence. The publication of this book is, therefore, quite an event and marks the stage reached after almost half a century of independence.

Painting in Pakistan is now known to have existed even during the pre-Indus Valley period (Mehrgarh, Amri, Kot Diji) and more abundantly in the Harappa and Moenjodaro era. It was however used for colouring and beautifying objects. Artists worked in clay, stone, gems, bronze and much else to produce pottery, statues, jewellery and the famous intaglio seals. Painting as an independent art was developed during the Gandhara School period (1st to 8th century) and again mural painting in palaces was widely practiced with the beginning of Muslim rule by the Ghaznavids in Lahore around 1000 AD, as known from contemporary accounts. However, very little has survived the ravages of time. Still, our archaeologists have salvaged enough to trace the golden trail of art. It was no doubt in manuscript illustration that the greatest triumphs were achieved, which are the glory of our art.

The post-Independence painters of Pakistan have been influenced by the art movements of the West, although most of them adapted the forms to their own cultural universe. Strong influence can be detected in our painters of the schools of Impressionism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Op Art and others. By now, however, many of our leading artists have developed authentically original styles.

It is a matter of satisfaction for me that the publication of this book has been undertaken by the National Book Foundation, which is a subsidiary organisation of the Ministry of Education. It was not easy to convince the bureaucrats of the Ministry of the importance of the work, and the necessity of extending Government support to such ventures. A work relating to art was not considered a serious proposition by those used to files, summaries and reports. The support of Mr. Ahmed Faraz, the Managing Director of the National Book Foundation, was however, most invaluable. Considering the art scene in Pakistan, I believe Government support and patronage of such ventures is absolutely essential, at least, at this stage.



PREFACE

Perhaps there is no other field of our national life in which such phenomenal progress has been made during these five decades since Independence as in art. There was a time, as late as 1982, when a laboriously collected art exhibition was sent officially to America but it received no more than a dozen lines of review in the Washington Post and those too not very complimentary. Now in 1994, major exhibitions of Pakistani art are being held in Pasadena, Calif. USA and in Bradford, UK and at the East-West Center in Hawaii. Pakistani art is being recognized.

This book is a personal tribute to the hundreds of artists of our country who have raised the name and fame of Pakistan in the art world. This object of course, was farthest from their minds. They were simply trying to create beauty in paint and other media for their own pleasure and that of others.

Beginning as awkward tyros and copyists of foreign artists, they gradually advanced from decade to decade to create authentic art that was their very own. Many died unappreciated and unrewarded. Some received brickbats rather than bouquets. But they persevered and the people of Pakistan suddenly realized that something precious was being offered to them. People began to buy paintings and to hang them in their homes. Art galleries proliferated and prices rocketed - in the case of the top artists. You can still buy masterpieces at throwaway prices by artists who have not yet "arrived" or made it. Hurry and buy for the prices may soon go out of your reach!

The hesitant start, the neglect of the philistines and the contempt of the foreign-educated highbrows, the grudging recognition and now the widespread acclaim of Pakistani art is a saga which needs a Giorgio Vasari to chronicle in a worthy way. He wrote "Lives of the Painters" as personal reminiscences, in 1560.

Meanwhile, in all humility, I have taken up my pen. It has been my good fortune to have seen this whole drama from the ringside. I had the honour to know almost all the artists personally and saw them at work from the time they took up the brush for the first time. I shared my observations in print and perhaps helped to create some interest in art - to win the gratitude of some artists and the acrimony of others who could not take a little criticism together with much praise.

Anyway, it was a privilege to see their talent develop and to watch the toil and mental struggle through which they passed before achieving recognition. It all passes before my eyes like a film, the scenes in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta and Hyderabad.

Art was not part of my duties but I was drawn towards it by my background, and once sucked into the magic circle, there was no getting away. For five decades I have shared my thoughts, for what they are worth, with my readers in newspapers and magazines and when it was time to lay down the pen, because enough is enough, I thought I would replay the whole drama in writing, present a comprehensive picture, the sum total of what I had seen and enjoyed and learnt. This book is the result of untold labour, which it would be tiresome to itemise. My only regret is that the canvas is too small, the book too short for the subject. Perforce, I have had to write briefly on artists who deserved more detailed study, and even more regrettably, to leave out many artists who should have been included.

My heart is overflowing with gratitude for the artists whose friendship I have enjoyed and who let me into the secrets of their craft. I am also immensely thankful to the gallery owners (above all Ali Imam of Indus, Zohra Hussain of Chowkandi, Irfan Hussain of Gallery 122, Riffat Alvi of V.M. Gallery and Shehla Saigal of Lahore Art Gallery) who have always extended fullest courtesy and every help that I needed in my writing work.

Fullest credit however goes to Mr. M.M. Usmani, former Secretary, Ministry of Education, and for long vice-president of the Karachi Arts Council, without whose help this book would not have seen the light of day. To the National Book Foundation and its eminent Managing Director, poet Ahmed Faraz, my debt is inestimable for publishing the book. I am grateful to Mr. Fazle Vakil of Golden Graphics for the personal interest he has taken in printing this book. I must also acknowledge my debt to Mirza A. Jamil, Chairman, Elite Publishers who produced promotional material that helped in securing sponsorship of the book.

The end product which is in your hands, was carefully read and re-read by Prof. Aqila Zaman of the Home Economics College, Karachi, who rid the book of many errors, for which I am most thankful.

And so I come to the end of this rambling introduction and perhaps to the end of my time. As I cast a backward look at the vista that stretches behind me, I see spreading acres of blooms and a few tombstones of dear artists who fell on the way, God knows too soon. To the living and the dead who played out this great drama of Painting in Pakistan, my blessings and benedictions.

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COVER: Painting by Ahmed Parvez,
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Historical Introduction

THE DISTANT PAST (3000 BC TO AD 700)

If we seek the earliest beginnings of painting in Pakistan (which includes drawing), we cannot do better than turn our gaze to the hundred mile long gallery of rock carvings (and inscriptions) that spread along the Indus from Palas in Indus Kohistan to Chilas in Gilgit

The richest is the 50 mile portion between Shatial and Chilas where the Indus gorge is the narrowest. Here caravans crossed which came by the ancient Silk Route down through the Khujerab Pass or along the much older trans-Karakorum route through the Karakorum Pass.

As the caravans rested for a while after the crossing and heaved a sigh of relief after the hazardous mountain journey, they gave free rein to their imagination and scratched drawings or scribbled words on the riverside rocks. Men of many nationalities from age to age have left their marks on these imperishable rocks.

After an organized five-year research project was launched in 1982 under the leadership of Prof A. H. Dani and Prof. Karl Jettmar for the study of these petroglyphs in the Northern Areas, many more were discovered far upstream along the Indus and also in the valleys of many of the Indus tributaries and along the Silk Route upto Hunza.
Prof. Karl Jettmar declares:

"Rock paintings and rock carvings occur in practically every continent of the world but no province is so extremely interesting for so many scholars as the ones discovered in Pakistan."

Similar rock carvings have been discovered by Brigadier Muhammed Usman in the hillock of Tor Derai in the Lasbela District of Balochistan and at many other sites in Kharan District. About these Mian Said Qamar writes in "Pakistan Archaeology" Nos. 10-22:

"The engravings from Tor Derai consist of two groups. One is that of Kharoshti inscriptions which are similar to those pottery inscriptions which are dated by Sir Aurel Stein to the Kushan period.

"The second group is that of carvings that depict human figures and horsemen in groups as well as in individual form. As regards their style, the human figures bear a close resemblance with the many archaic pictures seen on the rocks at different sites in Chilas. The human figures at Chilas are normally found accompanied by animals such as ibexes, goats and sheep, which in most cases represent hunting scenes. Several quartz flakes also were found in the sand where these pictures occur on the rocks. An examination of these flakes revealed that they had been chipped off from the cores to make microlithic tools of nongeometric shape. The collection consists of scrapers and points, mostly triangular in form. The general features of these tools suggest Mesolithic hunters . It was on the basis of these tools plus a comparative study of rock art that Prof. A. H. Dani has been inclined to date the archaic engraving of Chilas around 5000 to 3000 BC."

In 1992 Prof. Jettmar arranged in Karachi a splendid exhibition of photographs of some of these rock carvings. These are dated by him from the 3rd millennium BC to the 8th-10th century AD. One which shows dancers with tailed dresses on one side of the rock and a huge mascoid (mask-like face) on the other, is dated by him to the end of the 3rd millennium BC. Another shows what he calls "a Surrealistic rendering of a demon or a deity". It is a huge figure with big long arms, a large quadrangular face which is made "hair raising" by showing the hair standing straight and high. The feet are made into a big crescent. Both the above are found at Thalpan on the Indus, very near Chilas, and there are many more on what he calls the Altar Rock of Thalpan. At least two more must be mentioned, which are not scratchings like the above two but real works of art. One is described by Jettmar as a fantastic animal, (like a horse) horned, with tasselled mane, tufted tail and what look like wings. The second is a west-Iranian warrior, with broad belt and flared gown, holding up a goat by one leg and a dagger in the other hand, about to slaughter it. Both are dated by Jettmar to the middle of the 1st millennium BC.

And so the spectacle continues, from century to century. By the 1st century AD Buddhist subjects become common, monks and stupas, Boddhisatvas and the Buddha himself. Extremely well drawn horses are common. A beautiful carving of the Buddha, with hands in teaching gesture (dharmacakra mudra) adorns a rock at Thor, on the bank of the Indus, east of Chilas, and is dated to the 7th century AD. These and other examples of the late Gandhara art are perhaps the only examples of this late period extant.

OIdest Excavated Cultures

From the northern fringes of Pakistan we turn to the mainland, where we find far older vestiges of art. In fact, the oldest signs of civilization in all the subcontinent have been found in Balochistan where man first moved up from the level of hunter-gatherer and nomadic pastoralist to the settled life of an agriculturist, or the Neolithic stage.

The oldest site so far excavated is at Mehrgarh, 90 miles SW of Quetta and this goes back as far as 6000 BC. By 5000 BC they were making both handmade and wheel-thrown pottery with painted decorations, monochrome, bichrome and polychrome. Many other sites have been excavated in Balochistan, not so old as Mehrgarh but still pre-Harappan, where pottery was made and decorated. Discussing the "emergence of a Baluchistan province of ceramic decoration", Allchin says, "The first decorative designs at Mundigak I (on the same plateau but now in Afghanistan) soon blossom into more complex patterns, including quite elaborate geometric motifs as in the Quetta ware.... The art of pottery painting seems to have reached its peak in these regions in the late fourth and early third millennium, with the graceful fish or animals of the polychrome Nal ware, the naturalistic friezes of animals or pipal leaves of Mundigak IV, the 'animals in landscape' motifs of Kulli ware, recalling the 'Scarlet' ware of Diyala and Susa in southern Persia, and many more."(Allchin P.141-42).

Coming to the plains, it was at Amri in Lower Sindh on the west bank of the Indus that for the first time, a pre-Harappan phase of the Indus Valley Civilization was found. The earliest strata of the excavations go back to about 4000 BC and revealed handmade pottery in which geometrical designs were painted on black or brown and on a cream or pink ground.

Photographs in this section printed by courtesy of Archaeological Department.

Imaginary winged horse with tasselled mane, tufted tail and a horn in front. Carving at the so-called Altar Rock near Thalpan Bridge, downstream of Chilas on the Indus. Middle of Ist millennium BC.





An ibex being chased by a snow leopard, Carved on a rock near Thalpan in rhythmic lines with remarkable fidelity to the observed subject. Ist millennium BC.

the communities closer together . The effect on the arts and on pottery was that the regional character of many settlements and cultures gave way to a unified style over a vast region.

The stage was now set for the emergence of great urban centres and the rise of the Indus Valley Civilization. This was an urban phenomenon and it is called the Harappan Culture because it was first discovered at Harappa in the Punjab in 1920. Only two years later another metropolis with remarkably similar features was discovered at Moenjodaro in Sindh. They are the oldest planned cities built by man, laid out neatly on a grid system, provided with an elaborate drainage system, the first ever, and having houses built with standard size baked bricks, all according to a regulated scheme which gives everywhere the impression of order and symmetry.



Kot Diji Culture painted pottery, with horned deity. Early 3rd millennium. Terracotta.

The vast sphere of the Indus Valley Civilization in the west and across Pakistan's border in the east, is proved by more than a hundred sites that have been excavated. The uniformity of weights and measures, brick sizes and building techniques. pictographic language, pottery forms and decorations, and much else suggest a central authority over this extensive area in that distant period when it flourished (2600 BC to 1900 BC) when the largest unit in the contemporary civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia was far smaller.

Iron was unknown to the people of the Indus Valley but beautiful copper and bronze domestic tools and utensils are found in large numbers. Shell was extensively used in the manufacture of dippers, cups, ladles, balls, gamesmen, beads. dices. bangles. ornaments and for inlay in wooden objects.

The favourite designs included petals, leaves, cross, crescent, heart and eye shape. Bone and ivory objects comprise decorated combs, gamesmen, collyrium sticks and jewellery. According to Raymond Allchin, "The technical level achieved over so great an area as demonstrated in the Harappan civilization is probably unique in the ancient world and Harappan technology deserves Gordon Childe's acclaim as 'technically the peer of the rest' (that is of Egypt and Mesopotamia)".

Arts and Crafts of the Indus Valley

The strong artistic impulse of the Indus Valley people found expression in a variety of media such as pottery, terracotta figurines, small stone statuettes and bronze cast figurines and animals but above all in the famous steatite seals which are little masterpieces of intaglio carving. If there were any wall paintings, they have not survived though a cotton cloth fragment was recovered from Moenjodaro having sixty ends and twenty picks per inch.

Late Amri rimless pottery, with a band painted around the neck and stylized animal. 2500 BC.



Wheel-thrown pottery was made in enormous quantities in an endless variety of shapes and sizes. Much of it was plain and utilitarian but some was painted . All were well-fired and had a thick red fabric, often treated with a bright red slip, the commonest motifs being foliated or geometrical such as interlocking circles, fishscales and combs.

Innumerable terracotta figurines have been found representing men, women, bulls, buffaloes, goats, monkeys, hens, bullock-carts and much else but women and bulls predominate as they perhaps had some religious significance, symbolizing fertility by the Mother Goddess and masculine power by the bull.Though most of these figurines are similar for, in general, they are modelled playfully and lightheartedly but a few have been executed with flair and expressive power which raises them to the level of works of art.

As the figurines show, both the men and women wore much jewellery. Therefore an abundance of jewellery and a workshop have been excavated at Chanhudaro in Upper Sindh (one of the sites of the Mature Harappan Culture) which shows the high degree of skill attained in moulding and firing faience to make beads, and in shaping and etching carnelian beads, especially the barrel-shaped ones which have been skillfully bored. The carnelian beads have artistic designs made on them with chemicals that eat into the stone. The beads are strung together to make necklaces, bracelets. rings and earrings.

The technical skill and artistic flair with which the vast variety of animals has been depicted is indeed impressive. There are elephants, tigers, rhinoceroses, antelopes, humped bulls with dewlap and humpless bulls with thick neck, alligators, hooded pythons, wild asses but no horses. The humpless bull is shown sideways so that the two horns become one, giving it the look of a unicorn. However, the humped Indian bull is shown with two horns. It seems, the former had some cultic significance, as it has always in front of it a short decorated post which is variously interpreted as a standard, a manger or an incense burner. The fact that these humpless bulls have their back or neck covered with a drape adds to the impression that they are holy objects.

There are some seals that have a single human figure, like a stately seated horned deity, or a number of men engaged in what seems to be worship of a standing horned deity, and these scenes are excellently composed but the human figures are very cavalierly dashed off. unlike the care and truthfulness found in the rendering of animals.

Speaking about the art of Harappa and Moenjodaro, H. Goetz writes:

"Painting we know only from the decoration of the pots, a mass-produced folk art which cannot be treated on the same level as the aristocratic art of the statuettes and the steatite seals. Nevertheless even the folk art sheds some light on the general character of Indus Valley painting. The pictures drawn in swift slapdash black lines show a mixture of geometric motifs, crisscross lines. scales, chessboard patterns, rows of dotted circles or intersecting circles etc., with almost naturalistic representations of leaves, trees, birds, sometimes peacocks, occasionally deer, goats, jackals. In contrast, the rare human figure, woman and child, fisherman with his net, are executed in a stiff and highly simplified manner, reminding of the scenes on the early Greek geometric vases . Though originally related to the painted pottery of Baluchistan (Rana Gundhai and Kulli) the painting style of the sprawling, lush green Indian plains stands in marked contrast to the dry and rigid but more powerful compositions of the barren Baluchistan mountains."



Elaborate scene showing religious ceremony, with a horned deity standing on a pipal tree, top left.



Unicorn with manger in front.



Unicorn and manger.



Brahmani bull with dewlap and inscription. 1.4" x 1.4".



Moenjodaro steatite seals carved deep (intaglio) to stamp on lac or other malleable material, with undeciphered inscriptions. An elephant with an inscription above. 1.3" x 1.3".

Post-Indus Civilization

This amazing urban civilization which managed to maintain such remarkable harmony and uniformity over a truly vast area, at a time when in the rest of the world the largest effective unit was no more than a city state, flourished from 2600 BC for seven centuries but disintegrated around I900 BC. Various reasons have been put forward for this, such as floods, earthquakes, decreasing rainfall, change in the course of the Indus and finally invasion by Indo-Aryan speaking people, as suggested by Gordon Childe in 1934 and Mortimer Wheeler in 1946. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that city life disappeared from Pakistan for several centuries and gave place to more or less uniform peasant settlements all over the region.

This decline affected the arts also. In Balochistan, where the largest number of sites have been excavated, with pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan culture levels, the fine tradition of painted pottery seems to have come abruptly to an end. In place of the great variety of naturalistic and abstract designs, in monochrome, bichrome and polychrome, there appeared plain ware, coarse hand-made pottery with bands of clay pasted on, or impressions made with fingertips and nails. Where the pottery is painted, the range of designs is restricted.

However, other epoch-making changes were taking place. At Pirak and other Balochistan sites, the post-Harappan levels revealed terracotta and also unburnt clay figurines of horses, riders and camels. Iron objects appeared for the first time and so too axes and adzes with shaft holes. All this clearly suggests immigration or invasion from the west and north and the addition of a new element in the population.

In Sindh too the distinctive features of the Mature Harappan culture are missing at the sites where settlements continued in the post-Harappan period, after 1900 BC. Some of these like Jhukar and Jhangar have their own distinctive pottery. At Jhukar the pots were taken off the wheel and beaten with a flat piece of wood to reduce the thickness and to produce a sheen. At Amri, seals of faience began to be made, mostly round.

In the Punjab the most important vestiges of post-Harappan culture were found at Harappa itself, in an adjoining site called Cemetery H.By contrast, Moenjodaro ceased to exist even as a settlement, let alone as a city. At Harappa Cemetery H, signs of disintegration were found. On top of that was discovered a burial ground in two strata, the upper of which contained urns in which the bones of many persons were buried. On the shoulders of these urns are broad bands bounded by straight or wavy lines, within which are often shown peacocks with long streaming feathers flowing from their heads. In other cases, within these bands are rows of bulls or cows, with plant-like forms springing from their horns or a pipal leaf rising from the hump. One vase shows two beasts facing each other, held by a man with long wavy hair.

Vase from Nindowari, showing elongated bull and Kulli type bichrome decoration.



Although there is definite continuity in the forms and decorations of the pottery of the Harappan and the post-Harappan period at Cemetery H. (as use of black on red ground for painting pottery) there are markedly new features also. New forms include urns, graceful footed vases and carinated vessels (with a ridge breaking the roundness of the form), while the new decorations, such as stars and ring-and-dot motif, are foreign to the Mature Harappan Culture, as also are the extraordinary painted covers of vessels decorated with birds or pipal leaves. The inference is that there was a new element in the population, whether immigrants or conquerors, who, however, mingled with the locals. The experts believe that the Cemetery H. Culture lasted from 1900 BC to 1500 BC.

Grave Culture

Higher up north, the gap in our proto-history between the end of the Harappan Culture and the beginning of the historic period in the 6th century BC when the Achaemenians conquered Gandhara, was filled by the discovery of numerous graveyards in Swat, Buner, Chitral and Dir, which has come to be called the Gandhara Grave Culture. The burial urns and other grave goods found here with the skeletons or bones, opened up a new horizon. Particularly relevant to our discussion are the cemeteries excavated at Loebanr III and Birkot-Ghundai, both in Swat, which span the period 1700 BC to 1400 BC. At both sites black grey burnished ware as also black-on-red painted ware was in

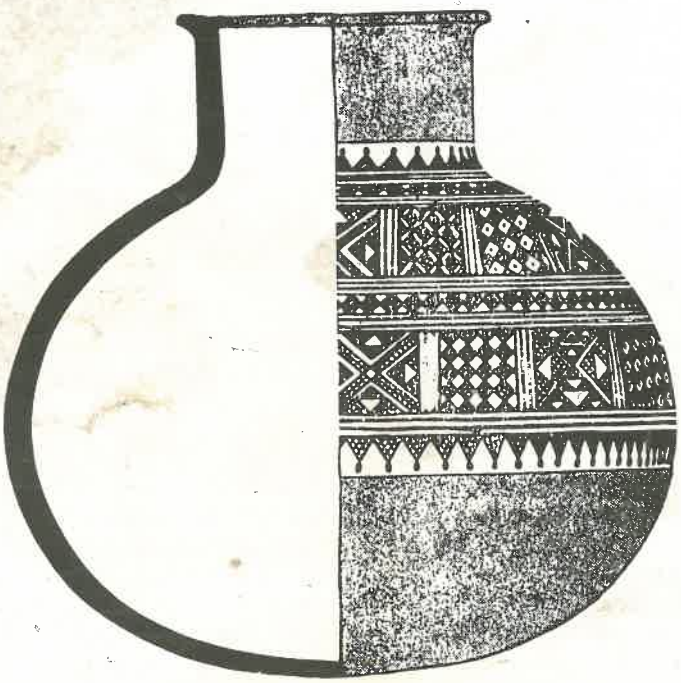
abundance. At Birkot-Ghundai floral patterns too were found painted on pottery, such as pipal leaves and trees, and four-petalled rosettes, while living creatures included oxen, ho ses, peacocks and other birds. As the horse nowhere appears in the Indus Valley seals, this suggests a foreign element in the population here.

Coming still closer in time, more sites excavated in Swat have unveiled the period 1400 BC to 300 BC at Loebanr I, Katelai and Butkara II, while another important site is Timargarha farther northwest in Dir, where the historical span is 1600 BC to 600 BC. At the Swat sites have been found red and also grey burnished ware of quite new and distinctive forms, such as pedestal cups, beakers with flared mouths, and so on. These were placed with the dead in their graves. Specially noteworthy are burial urns in which a face has been depicted by simply making three holes in a triangle. This may have had some religious significance. New also are objects of iron, indicating the arrival of the iron age here. There are two horse graves also, and this animal is nowhere depicted on the 2,000 odd seals of the Indus Valley Civilization found so far. All this suggests a new element in the population, that may have been the Aryans who are said to have overwhelmed the Indus Valley people.

The Gandhara Grave Culture was thought to be limited to the northern hilly region until the momentous discovery was made of similar sites, first on the Potwar Plateau at Sarai Khola near Taxila, and then at Zarif Karuna in Peshawar Valley, right in the plains.

The Sarai Khola site goes back to 3000 BC and lasted till 600 BC. Unlike the other sites, it was not merely a graveyard but a habitation of the living. Only in one excavated level were two cemeteries found but they had no grave goods as those of Swat and Timargarha had. Only in the graves of some women two finger rings of iron and some other objects were found which clearly marks it of the Iron Age. Apart from the graves many gold objects were found which suggests a prosperous society. In the lower levels handmade and in the upper levels wheel-thrown pottery was plentiful. The most extensively distributed pottery type was what is called Kot Diji ware, that is pots with short necks and globular bodies, with solid bands painted around the neck in red. sepia or black in straight horizontal lines or wavy loops or hatched designs.

Zarif Karuna is the first site of the Gandhara Grave Culture to be found in the plains. It spans the period 1200 BC to 800 BC. There is much in common between this and the Swat and Dir burial cultures . A wide variety of pottery and personal ornaments have been found in the graves. Very significant is the presence of grey ware pottery with a disc base, a sure sign of its connection with Iran and the west.



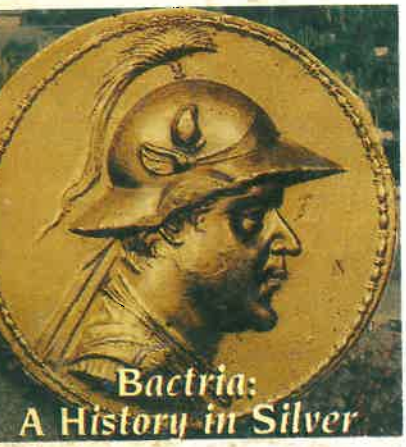
Painted pottery from Pirak.



Paintings on pottery of post-Harappa period found in Cemetery H by the side of Harappa.



King Demetrius wearing an elephant scalp in the style of Alexander to show he conquered (c. 200 BC) northwest India, now Pakistan, where elephants abounded. Called King of India in Chaucer's The Knight's Tale.



Eucratides the Great, as shown on his 20-stater coin, 2.5 in. diameter, 6 oz. weight, the world's largest and rarest ancient gold coin. He first captured the dominions of Demetrius in Bactria and then defeated Demetrius in India (rather, Pakistan).



Menander, who firmly established Greek rule in northern Pakistan after Bactria had been lost to the Yueh Chi (Tokharians) c. 150 BC. He built the Greek city at Taxila now called Sirkap.

The Historical Era

Towards the end of the 6th century BC Pakistan entered the historical era because Darius I of Persia conquered northwestern and southwestern Pakistan, which fact he recorded in the rock inscription of Behistun dated 518 BC, mentioning Gandhara and Makran as parts of his empire. His successors extended their sway all over Pakistan and ruled it for two hundred years till Alexander the Great smashed their power in 327 BC. Persian rule left lasting marks on the life and art of Pakistan and this was reinforced in 241 AD when the Persian King Shahpur I again conquered Gandhara and yet again in 340 when Shahpur II quelled the local rulers through whom the Persians ruled the land, allowing the local dynasties to continue.

The Persian influence on life in Pakistan was too diverse to be described here (adoption of Aramaic, the official language of the first Persian conquerors, the administrative system, burial customs, fire worship and much else) but the influence on art also was deep and noteworthy . This is seen on the coinage, from the earliest "punch marked" bar-shape coins modelled on coins of the Sassanian rulers (who included Shahpur I and II). In architecture, the Persians introduced the Persepolitan column whose capital was formed by the heads of two bulls back to back, and the under-capital of volutes (scrolls) on either side. The shaft was fluted and tapering, while the base was floral. The last feature was followed often in Mughal architecture and even in our contemporary Minar-e-Pakistan. The whole Persian column appears often in Gandhara carved panels.

Motifs introduced by Persia include the rosette, the cypress and the lotus which are used in Pakistani art till today . In fact, decoration of flat surfaces with ingenious designs, as against representational art, was a major Persian contribution.

The Greeks in Pakistan

The vast Persian empire which spread from the Aegean Sea to the Indus and beyond was suddenly shattered by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. In 327 the Macedonian phalanxes burst into Pakistan where many cities and strongholds had to be besieged and stormed but the Persian satraps (governors) and local rulers tributary to Persia offered little resistance. His greatest encounter was on the banks of the Jhelum with King Porus, and then with the Malli tribe in Multan but Alexander flashed like a meteor across Pakistan "leaving not a wrack behind" . The military force left by him could not hold out against the locals who, under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya, wrested power from them within twenty years.

The Mauryans gave the country a rare century of self-rule and peace (roughly 300 BC to 200 BC). Chandragupta's grandson Asoka extended his empire over the whole of Indo-Pakistan and Afghanistan but more relevant to our subject is that he embraced Buddhism and became its greatest missionary . In his rock inscriptions at Shahbaz Garhi, Mansehra and Sirkap he preached the religion of love and peace (but after waging fierce wars and killing all his brothers and other possible rivals to the throne). Buddhism thus became the religion of the people. Asoka built the first great stupa, the Dharmarajika Stupa (Stupa of the Righteous King) at Taxila. It was these stupas, the new Buddhist monuments which enshrine a casket containing sacred relics in a huge solid domical structure, for which the Buddhist school of Gandhara sculpture came into being. Carved panels and figures showing the Buddha and his life, were fixed all round the drum of the stupa over which rose the semi-spherical dome.

The Bactrian Greeks

However, Alexander the Great had set up a colony of the Greeks in Bactria (Balkh and the surrounding region of northern Afghanistan) . The Greek rulers of this independent kingdom found an opportunity to invade Pakistan when the Mauryan Empire collapsed around 200 BC. Within a few decades they had annexed all the country upto the Arabian Sea.

Relevant to our subject is the fact that they built a new city in Taxila, called Sirkap, laid out on a grid plan on the Greek model. Just outside this city at a site now called Jhandial, they built a Greek temple, parts of which have survived. At the front entrance

are two Ionic columns. Inside the temple were statues and wall paintings, now lost but attested by a Greek writer. A few sculptured heads of Dionysus, satyrs and wreathed female figurines have also been found from the ruins of Sirkap, all of which show that the Bactrian Greeks brought with them a well-developed art, craftsmanship and craftsmen. As Dr. A. H. Dani has observed "It is to the Greek workmanship of the Bactrian school that Gandhara art owes its origin."

Some of the earliest pieces of sculpture unearthed in scientifically conducted excavations at Taxila by Sir John Marshal are non-Buddhist Hellenistic work, in form, style and subject, such as circular carved discs of the locally quarried bluish schist depicting such classical scenes as Marriage of Dionysus, and Ariadne, another showing Aphrodite dallying with Eros, or a semi-nude female riding a marine monster. These are commonly called "Toilet Trays"

There are also found plaques or panels used as "stair risers" on which are carved non-Buddhist classical scenes such as drinking and musical bouts and others. Among the finds is a torso of an Atlantid and naked cupids and such classical figures.

But Sir John Marshall dates the earliest specifically Buddhist sculplure to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD and not to the Bactrian Greek period (200 BC to 100 BC). He states in his book on Gandhara Art, that "among the myriads of Buddhist monuments and antiquities that have survived until the present day there is not one that can be referred with certainty to Greek authorship in the second century before our era."

The earliest examples of the school of art that have come to be called Gandhara are found in the strata referable to the Saka period 20 AD to 70 AD. This was inspite of the fact that at least one, and the most powerful of the Bactrian Greek rulers, Menander, embraced Buddhism.

After Menander, the Bactrian Greek kingdom in Pakistan broke up into small states and by 80 BC it had been replaced by a Scythian tribe called the Sakas. They had advanced from the region north of the Pamirs and west of the Tian Shan Mountains (roughly Tajikistan) and conquered Bactria and all the Bactrian kingdoms in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By 80 BC their king Mauves was on the throne of Taxila. These barbarians were quite open minded and allowed Greek culture and Buddhist religion to continue and to flourish. No wonder therefore that Sir John Marshall recovered many Hellenistic artifacts from the strata referable to the Saka period.

Their rule was very short and by 20 AD a Parthian king, Gondophernes was on the throne of Taxila. The Parthians were Eastern Iranians whose homeland was Khorasan, northeastern Iran. They, under the leadership of Arsaces overthrew the Seleucid rulers who succeeded Alexander the Great after his conquest of Persia. Having lived under a century of Greek rule, they had become highly Hellenized, and this tendency was reinforced when they inherited Hellenistic culture in Mesopotamia, Syria and Turkey where they replaced previous Greek dominion. As they controlled the trade routes between the West and Gandhara, this facilitated the free flow of culture and art from Greece and Rome and more importantly, from the eastern centres of Hellenism in Asia Minor and Syria. They are therefore stated by Bernard Goldman to have adopted "the self-designated role as the continuers of Hellenistic Seleucid culture and manners" In fact, he goes so far as to maintain that it was not Greece or Rome which influenced Gandhara art but "Greek Hellenistic and Roman elements as adopted and integrated by the Parthians" because "they provide the closest comparisons with the art of Gandhara".

Art received a great fillip in Parthian times and Buddhism too was encouraged, as we find an inscription of King Gondopheres in the great monastery at Takht-i-Bahi in Mardan district. One stupa at Sirkap (Taxila) called the Double-headed Eagle Shrine belongs to the Parthian period.

The Parthians had ruled northern Pakistan for hardly a century when they were overwhelmed by another Scythian tribe from Central Asia called the Kushans, around 70 AD. The vast Parthian empire in Western Asia lasted much longer. The Kushans had come from the oases in the north of the Takli Makan Desert in Xinjiang, and migrating slowly westward, had conquered the Oxus Valley, then Bactria (Balkh and northern



The 175 foor high colossal Buddha carved into the live rock at Bamiyan in the 3rd or 4th century AD. It was described by the Chinese monk Hsuan-Tsang, who came here in 732 A and found it gilded and painted.

Afghanistan) and then swarmed into Pakistan. The fourth king of this dynasty was the great Kanishka whose empire included the valleys of the Oxus, the Indus and the Ganges. His winter capital was Mathura (near Agra in India) and his summer capital Purusapura (modern Peshawar) both of which became centres of two flourishing schools of sculpture, Classical Indian and Gandhara, respectively.

Kanishka was converted to Buddhism and became its ardent missionary. Gandhara was filled with two kinds of Buddhist holy structures, the Stupa or solid domed structure over a cylindrical and a square base, enshrining a relic, and the Vihara or monastery for the monks to stay, when they were not wandering, during the rainy season.

Two great changes took place in Buddhist art and thought which shaped the entire character of Gandhara culture. Buddha's teachings were purely ethical, with no conception of God or gods or of worship and certainly not of idol worship. However, his magnetic personality became hallowed in the course of centuries and an object of reverence. In the pre-Gandharan Buddhist art, as found in India at Barhut and Sanchi, men and women and various superhuman beings drawn from popular mythology, were shown bending their heads in love and devotion to Buddha. But he himself was represented by symbols; his birth by a lotus, his attainment of enlightenment by the bo tree; his first sermon by the wheel, and his death by the stupa.

For the eager desire of the devotees to worship a visible object, the material image of the Buddha was created, both standing and seated. with clearly defined characteristics. The seated figure especially become so popular that it spread far and wide . Thus began idol worship on an unprecedented scale. It was in Gandhara that this basic image of Buddha was created, which became universally popular.

Secondly, in Kushan times, there took place the development of the idea of the Boddhisatva, the epithet for the Buddha in the making. The ideal and example of the Buddha seemed too lofty and hard to attain. He had attained nirvana, the Buddhist ideal of release from the cycle of birth and rebirth. But the example of the Boddhisatva was more easy to follow, as he was still struggling.

The miraculous birth of Buddha (named Gautama Siddharta at birth) from the side of his mother Queen Maya, in the Garden of Lumbini.(Lahore Museum)



These were the two new and major contributions of Gandhara sculpture but even more fascinating are the numerous panels depicting some of the major incidents in the life of the Buddha: like the prediction of his birth by the astrologers; his miraculous birth, his marriage; his Great Departure from the palace at dead of night in search of truth; his fruitless effort to seek light through long fasting; his Temptation by Mara and his army, the forces of evil; the sudden revelation vouchsafed to him under the bo or pipal tree; his first sermon in the Deer Park of Sarnath (modern Banaras) and his death.

An added pleasure provided by Gandhara sculpture is the insight into the life of the common people of the times, though it is no doubt generally a canonical and religious art. We come to know of the racial types, the social classes. the dresses and jewellery, hair styles and head dresses, arms and armour, houses and furniture, trees, birds animals and innumerable other aspects of the life of those times for which we have no other source of information.

After reaching its peak in the middle of the 2nd century AD (the reign of Kanishka), a period of repetition and decline began in Gandhara art. This gave it a staid and solemn look, in keeping with its character as a sacred art but artistically it became nerveless and conventional. At first the artist was seeking personal expression; later he was rendering stock themes in stock techniques.

This was partly the result of exhaustion of creative force and elan and partly of excessive demand upon the labours of the sculptor who was called upon to turn out work in hundreds and thousands to adorn the increasing number of stupas and monasteries.



A Boddhisatva

Gandhara Painting

Painting was a favourite form of expression with the Buddhists and often accompanied the sculpture. Gandhara sculpture itself was always painted and gilded and the surface or niches in which it was set were covered with painting. Unfortunately, painting is more fragile than sculpture. So, while we have a myriad examples of Gandhara sculpture, very little painting has survived in what is now Pakistan except what has been excavated by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Swat. They have been working there since 1956 and even by 1981 they had made many startling discoveries. Here it would be relevant to mention one of their finds in the area of painting. It was stated in one of their reports that at Butkara 1 (near Mingora in Swat):

"The walls of the Great Stupa were covered with successive plaster coatings, the second of which has painted decorations representing winding red and blue festoons with open lotus blossoms in volutes."

The construction of the Great Stupa in its present form is assigned to the 7th-8th centuries.

Domenico Faccena has observed in his voluminous report of excavations at Butkara I (Swat) Part 3, p. 713:

"However, the most outstanding samples of figurative pictorial work are two small fragments. The larger one comprises the remaining two figures facing right and seen in three-quarter view. That further to the right is a male figure preserved down to the waist. It is wearing a corselet type tunic fastened by a band, with short sleeves and semi-circular lower hem. The garment was painted sky-blue....The painting portrays a series of human personages with garments and ornaments; two men and a woman, looking to the right and in variety of postures, indicating offerings, prayer and greeting....Every element bespeaks careful realistic portrayal....Dating can be limited to the 2nd-4th century AD.

"The festoon motif is widespread. We meet it again in relief cornices, in architectural and ornamental features and in stupa-shaped relic caskets. The festoon motif recurs in the lower cylinder of GST4 on whose wall surface it finds its most ample, developed and best preserved expression." (Butkara I, Part 3, p. 704)



rely visible crumbled fresco at Butkara I in vat

Bamiyan

However since the cultural realm of Gandhara extended to Afghanistan and beyond, it may not be out of place to mention many remarkable mural paintings discovered there.

Some 150 miles northwest of Kabul is the narrow picturesque valley of Bamiyan . It is commanded by a long line of cliffs whose statuesque forms called for the hammer and chisel of the sculptor. Lying on the main east-west trade route but slightly off, it was ideally suited for setting up a Buddhist monastic establishment and so it was used.

"It was probably during the time of Kanishka and his successors (1st-3rd century) that the complicated system of monastic caves was begun and embellishment continued through the VII century."

This is roughly the same time during which the Ajanta Caves were carved and painted.

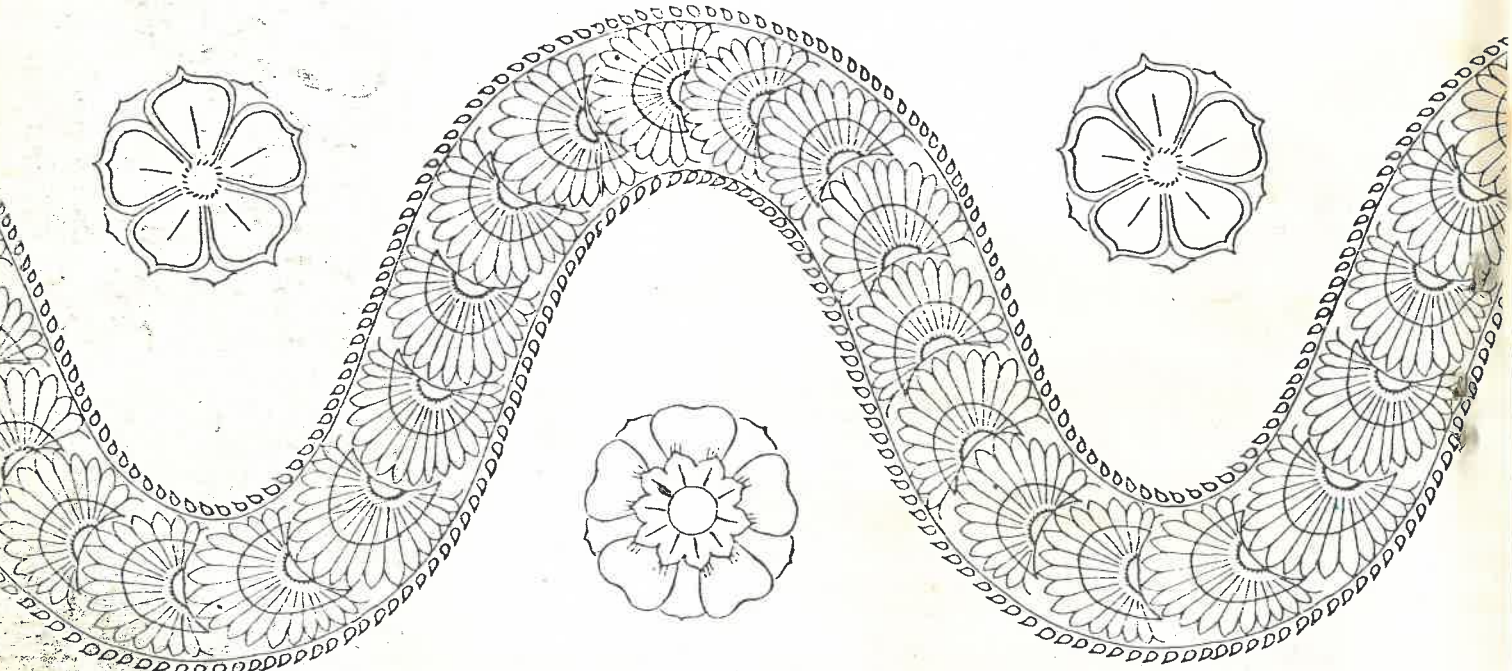
Cut into the rock are a series of fifteen grottos arranged in a series of communicating units or groups. All the available space on the wall was covered with paintings, many of which have survived, partly or fully.

The most striking feature of this huge complex are the two colossal Buddhas carved in the live rock, which have been made into niches for the protection of the statues. On the eastern side is the 120 foot Buddha and on the western end is the 175 foot colossus, better proportioned because made later, in the 4th or 5th century against the 1st-2nd century period of the smaller Buddha. Unfortunately, the faces of both have been mutilated by iconoclasts. Both the Buddhas were painted and so were the niches in which they are set.

The paintings in Grotto XI have been thus described:

"The male figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas sit on massive curtained thrones, not in the rigid pose of yoga as their Sassanian counterparts below, but somewhat nonchalantly, with their feet crossed at the ankles.... While their hands form the characteristic Buddhist mudras, their long supple and be-jewelled arms and flexible fingers seem to act with weariness and their almond eyed faces gaze forth with sleepy languid expressions, lacking in mystical concentration.

"Contributing to this aura of other-worldliness is the existence of the female figures in evidence everywhere. To the west of the exit from the gallery, there is a very fine



The festoon motif as it recurs on the lower cylinder of GST4 at Butkara I in Swat. The motif is widespread and is met again and again in relief cornices, in architectural and ornamental features, and in stupa-shaped relic-caskets. Here it is reconstructed as a schematic drawing, scale I : 10.

Bodhisattva exhibiting all the characteristics just mentioned . Leaning towards him with arms outspread is an opulent female, nude except for the most diaphanous of veils, draped from a jewelled gold band at the waist." (Nancy Hatch Rupree in "Marg" Vol. XXIV 1971)

Prince Takshito Mikasa has observed in the catalogue of "Ancient Pakistan Culture Exhibition 1961 " held at Tokyo:

"The paintings of Bamiyan passed on something of their aesthetic canon and a taste for clear colours. In any case, the paintings in Ser-India are more eventful and picturesque and lack the hieratic quality of the great neighboring sites of the Hindukush.

"The spread of Gandhara Art towards the Far East did not however stop at Ser-India. Gradually, traditions and forms implanted in the region moved further on until they reached the great monastic centre of Tun-Huang on the borders of Kansu, where a new impetus carried them to China, to be propagated yet again in Korea and finally in Japan."

Such was the work of beauty created by the artists of the northwest region of Pakistan once called Gandhara. It was a loving tribute paid to one of the noblest men who ever walked on this earth, Gautama Buddha. To Muslims and Christians it may not appear to be religious art in the true sense because here the emphasis is on certain moral values rather than spiritual, and the ideal of a philosophical calm takes the place of the Semitic ideal of intense spiritual striving for communion with God. What we find in Gandhara Art is not the same excrutiatingly intense religious experience that we find in the stained glass windows of the Gothic cathedrals or in the inspiring and uplifting mosques and tombs of the Muslims. But it is an ennobling and elevating experience to be in the presence of some of the finest Buddhist statues and paintings. No doubt their power must have been tenfold in the proper setting of the monastery, with its solemn ceremonial, monks in saffron robes, bells tinkling and hymns being chanted. In the antiseptic and artificial setting of a museum, all this is lost and the statue or lifted slab of carving or painting stands there, to move us by its power and beauty alone.

A Yakshini (Hindu and Buddhist demi-goddess) standing under a palm tree. (Lahore Museum).



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Fresco Painting from the world-famous Ajanta Caves, in Deccan, which were carved and painted 1st to 7th centuries AD.

THE MIDDLE DISTANCE PAST (700 TO 1849 AD)

The trail of painting is difficult to trace in the succeeding centuries, for a thousand years separate the Buddhist murals discussed above and the forthcoming Mughal miniatures. It has well been remarked that scholars trying to establish a valid ancestry for the miniatures run into difficulties. As N.C. Mehta has remarked:

"Nothing is known of the pictorial art of Hindustan during the centuries intervening between the death of Harshavardhan in 648 AD and the accession of Akbar." (1556)

Similarly, Percy Brown has stated:

"With the decay of Buddhism in India in the seventh century, the art appears to have declined, and for the exceptionally long period of a thousand years, from the time the last painter at Ajanta threw down his brush in AD 650 until we come into contact with the art of painting again as it was revived by the Mughal emperors, this area is almost a blank. "

Still, modern research has made brave efforts to fill this gap. The discovery of Buddhist monasteries at Akhnur in Azad Kashmir very near Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, has brought to light much artistic activity of the 8th century, including the terracotta sculpture and the famous bronzes. Further, the researches of Prof. G. Tucci have shown that a distinctive school of painting flourished in Kashmir from the 8th to the 16th century. Examples are available in the fresco paintings of Nor Nor, Ysaparang and Alchi in Tibet in which Kashmiri artists participated. There is literary evidence to show that Qen Can Dzar Po invited artists from Kashmir to Western Tibet. Lama Taranath in his "History of Indian Buddhism" published in 1620 mentions one Kashmiri artist by name, Hasuraya, and his school. Buddhism spread to Tibet from Gilgit (a part of Kashmir), according to Prof. G. Tucci, and likewise Buddhist art would have followed. It is well known that artists from Kashmir were employed by Emperor Akbar in the execution of the first great painting project that he undertook, namely the illustration of the Romance of Amir Hamza. Among the artists who are known to have worked on this project are the names of Abdullah Kashmiri, Kamal Kashmiri, Mohammed Kashmiri, and Haider Kashmiri. The last specialized in portraiture. Also, the fact that all the Amir Hamza paintings made in the imperial atelier were painted on cloth, as was done in Kashmir, Tibet and Nepal, is significant. This was despite the fact that both Mir Syed Ali Tabrezi, who was head of the team of artists painting this series for seven years and after him, Khwaja Abdus Samad, had all their lives, learnt to paint on paper, first at Herat, the Timurid capital, and later at Tabrez, the Safavid capital, and only rarely on cloth, under the influence of China. The reason for choosing cloth may have been that the size of each page on which the Amir Hamza Dastaan (story) was painted was 29 x 22 3/4 inches and 1,400 folios of this size made up the whole book in 12 volumes. At that early stage in the manufacture of paper, it may have been difficult to make so much paper of that size, or at least, easier and quicker to paint on cloth.

The great masterpieces of Buddhist figure painting, done from the 1st century BC to the 7th century AD, lay hidden in caves and jungles in the Deccan till they were accidentally discovered in 1819. However, Taranath has stated that the traditions of Ajanta continued in the form of an Eastern, a Western and a Central School.

But out of the surviving examples of pictorial art, the next we find after the cave paintings of Ajanta are the miniature paintings on Buddhist subjects done on palm leaf in Bengal and Nepal. This Eastern school, in which the same Buddhist divinities are painted in graceful attitudes are an echo of the art of Ajanta, though a distant echo. The school was nurtured by the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar (7th to 12th century). However, what has survived are only a few manuscripts that are copies of older paintings executed in Nepal during the 11th century.

About the Western School, according to Taranath, the founder or the first artist was Sringadhara, who belonged to Marudeva (or Marwar or modern Jodhpur, not far from the borders of Sindh) and lived in the 7th century. This school is said to have flourished for five centuries.

However, it is impossible to believe that this Western School is represented by the surviving innumerable manuscripts of Gujrat and Rajasthan illustrating Jain scriptures

and some secular subjects too, painted in the 14th,15th and 16th centuries, because nothing could be more different from the refined and sophisticated style of Ajanta. These illustrations of the Jain scripture, Kalpasutras, were painted on oblong palm leaves 22 x 2 1/2 inches and later, in the 15th century, when Muslim traders and conquerors brought paper to Gujrat and Malwa, in size 12 x 4 inches. The wide open eyes, with the white prominent, the sharp pointed nose, and the farther eye added separately beyond the nose, double chin, flat top head, a fierce alertness of expression and black outline on a solid yellow or crimson ground, is far removed from Ajanta.

The patrons of Gujrati or Western School Jain paintings were the Gujrati merchants who got Jain texts illustrated. The sphere of this school included Gujrat, Rajasthan and Malwa. The Gujrat School had provincial variations as can be seen in the Kalpasutra of Mandu (Malwa) (1439) and the Kalpasutra of Jaunpur (1465) and similarly, in the manuscripts of Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, Muslim rule had been established in Northern Indo-Pakistan and by 1300 this region of Gujrat and Malwa had come under Muslim sway and Rajasthan too during the next few decades.

Muslim influence began to appear very clearly in some of these Gujrati Jain manuscript illustrations, especially in illustrations of the "Kalka Charya Katha" story, in which some foreign characters are painted with Mongol faces and shown wearing long coats or jamahs, exactly as seen in Timurid paintings of Persia of the latter half of the 14th century. Even the curling clouds, spray-like trees and decorative panels were freely used. These Persian influences came through the Gujrati traders who traded with Persia and may have brought manuscripts from there. Muslim traders too were active in Gujrat and their base was Cambay. These Persian influences continued in Gujrati painting to the 15th and 16th centuries and can be noted in the Devasana Pado Kalpasutra of c.1475.

Painting Under the Delhi Sultanate (13th to 15th century)

The five Turkish dynasties that ruled India in the 300 years before the Mughals, were munificent patrons of art and literature but sadly very few paintings or painted manuscripts have survived from that period.

However, diligent search and research has brought to light some illustrated MSS. Stuart Cary Welch in his "India: Art and Literature-1300-1900" has reproduced miniatures from two illustrated editions of Firdausi's Shah Namah and referred to a third, all dated from early 14th to early 15th century.

About the miniature from the so-called Schulz Shah Namah in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, Welch says: "The bright flat colours, with large areas of vermilion, look ahead to the 17th century pictures from Malwa, Central India, which was annexed by Ala-ad-Din Khalji in 1305 and continued to be governed from Delhi until it became independent in 1401, three years after Timur's sack of Delhi. In all likelihood these pictures belong either to the Khalji tradition or to that of the Tughlaqs who succeeded them in 1320."

After Malwa gained independence, it became a great centre of culture. Two illustrated manuscripts painted in Malwa by the same artist, who signed himself Haji Mahmud, are the most important survivals from the late 15th century and the first few years of the 16th. These are a book of cookery, drinks, perfumes and aphrodisiacs called "Nai'mat Namah" (Book of Delicacies) and the famous "Bostan" (Orchard) of the great Sa'adi of Shiraz. The large-eyed damsels in Malwa dress, show obvious links with older Gujrati paintings though the painting as a whole is in the manner of miniatures done in Shiraz.

The "Bostan" is a much superior work and the artist seems to have seen the original or copies of the "Bostan" illustrated by the great Behzad at Herat at the Timurid court. It has something of the same lucid composition, architectural background, decorated dresses and flooring in the layout, though the master's hand is missing in the portrayal of faces.



A Gujrati miniature illustrating a copy of the Jain scripture "Kalpasutra", dating from 1404 (Gujrat). Depicts the consecration of Mahavira (on left), founder of the Jain religion. 3" x 4".

During the last twenty, thirty years, many more paintings and illustrated manuscripts of the Sultanate period have been discovered and a few more references only will suffice. Dr. M. Abdulla Chaghatai in his book "Painting During the Sultanate Period" (1963) has mentioned many manuscripts, some of which are in the Punjab University Library (as one copy of "Khamsa Nizami" No. A/Pi vol/14 which contains 20 miniatures) and some in the Lahore Museum (as Mulla Daud's "Chandayan" No.x v.K7Kf which was considered worth printing as the frontispiece of the big impressive Commemorative Catalogue published on the occasion of the memorable exhibition "Art of India and Pakistan" held at London in 1947-48). Although in the comments on these paintings Basil Gray has declared them to belong to the Western Indian School, late 16th century, but Dr. Chaghatai rightly thinks that they were executed earlier than the establishment of the Imperial Mughal School.

Apart from miniature paintings, mural paintings were much encouraged by the Delhi Sultans as also by the Mughals. Literary accounts are full of descriptions of mural paintings done in the Sultanate period. Amir Khusrau in his "Qiran-us-Sadain" describes the mural and other decorations with which Delhi was decked to celebrate the reconciliation of Sultan Kaiqabaad with his father, Bughra Khan, Governor of Bengal. In other poems Amir Khusrau has also described the mural decorations in the palaces of Alauddin Khilji, who made the Amir his court poet with the title Amir.

Similarly, in the next dynasty of the Tughlaqs, Mohammed Tughlaq had murals painted in his palaces. We learn from Barani's "Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi" that when Firoz Shah Tughlaq ascended the throne after Mohammed Tughlaq he ordered the figurative murals to be effaced and garden scenes painted in their place, on religious grounds.

It was also a common practice among the Sultans and the Emperors in Indo-Pakistan to decorate the interior of their buildings with that typically Muslim abstract decoration called arabesque. This was of two kinds: floral and geometrical.



Sultan Ghayasuddin of Malwa (1469-1501) visits a mock bazar run by women (meena bazar). From the "Naimat-Namah" or Book of Delicacies painted towards the end of the Sultan's reign. 8.5" x 5.5". (India Office Library)

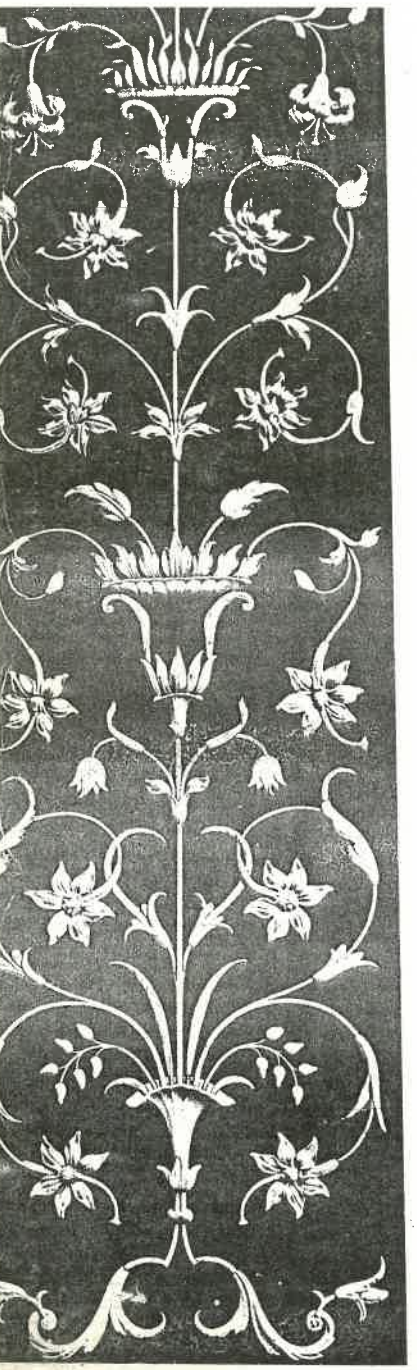


Laur Fighting in the Forest: illustration from a manuscript of "Laur Chanda" of Mulla Daud. Sultanate period; 2nd quarter of 16th century. Size about 7" x 5". (Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.)

Numerous buildings all over Indo-Pakistan have such arabesque paintings but from the Sultanate period,the best surviving examples are those in the mausoleums of Multan: Shah Yousuf Gardezi (1163): Shah Bahauddin Zakaria (1266): and Shah Rukn-e-Alam (1337). Other examples of mural paintings can be seen in the Namazgah (Idgah) at Lahore near Chahmiran (1412).



Rustam thrown into the sea by the demon Akwan. From the Schulz Shah-namah, of the Delhi Sultanate period, 14th century, Delhi or Malwa. About 2" x 4". (Metropolitan Museum)



Painting Under the Mughals

With the emergence of Mughal rule in Indo-Pakistan in 1526, which lasted, nominally till 1857, began a most remarkable efflorescence of art and craft. The output was so enormous that despite the turbulent times that intervened between the decline of the Mughals and the imposition of British rule, a great deal has survived, not, unfortunately, in the land of its origin but in the great museums of the west, in Europe and America, where almost all that was best was taken away. We must be grateful however that at least the art was lovingly preserved and painstakingly studied and published.

Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, besides being a famous conqueror, was a very artistic person and his Memoirs are full of most perceptive comments on the work of the great artist, Behzad, a contemporary then attached to the Timurid court in Herat.

Both before and after his conquest of Indo-Pakistan, Babur spent his life campaigning and had little time to indulge his artistic proclivities. He died in 1530 and was succeeded by his son **Humayun** who was more of a bibliophile and an aesthete than a warrior. Within three years he lost his kingdom to the intrepid Sher Shah. Luckily, he was given refuge by Shah Tahmasp of Persia who also gave Humayun help to begin recovery of his lost kingdom. During the year 1544 that he spent in Qazwin, the Persian capital, Humayun was deeply impressed by the work of the court artists and persuaded two of the best to come into his service after he won back his throne.

The very next year, Humayun established himself as the ruler of Kabul and the two leading Persian painters, Khwaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyed Ali joined him there after that. The former was a calligrapher and artist and the latter a calligrapher and naqqash (master of ornamental design). If Humayun got any work done by these artists during the ten years that he ruled Kabul and the one year that he ruled over Lahore, Delhi and Agra (Hindustan) then no trace remains of that.

In 1555 his fourteen year old son **Akbar** ascended the throne. He soon proved himself to be a great ruler as he not only extended the empire far and wide, laid the foundations of an efficient administration but also generously patronized all arts and crafts.

He took special interest in the production of beautifully illustrated books and the Mughal School of miniature painting was born under his personal patronage — as vividly described by his minister and biographer Abul Fazl in "Akbar Namah". The first great project that he entrusted to Mir Sayyed Ali was to get calligraphed and illustrated the Romance of Amir Hamza, which relates the imaginary exploits of the uncle of the Holy Prophet. This huge book contained 1,400 folios of 29 x 22 3/4 inches on which the painted miniatures were about 27 x 20 1/2 inches, with the picture on one side and the calligraphed text on the other. They were painted on cloth and bound in twelve volumes. However out of the 1,400 only 72 are now preserved in Vienna and another fifty in other Western museums. Work is thought to have begun in 1570 and to have been completed in 1582.

Naturally, for such a big project a large number of workers were necessary and thirty assistants worked with Mir Sayyed Ali in the production of this book, according to the contemporary historian Qazwini in his "Nafa'is-al-Ma'asir". Considering the fact that the setting of the story, the dresses, the trees and other details are local and contemporary, it can be assumed that the assistants were local artists who filled in the details after Mir Sayyed Ali laid out the broad composition of the picture.

The illustrations are brimming with action, objects, people, trees, animals and have an exuberance that became the mark of the new style of Mughal miniature.

The work of Akbar's atelier expanded with time. More artists were employed and trained and many more books written and illustrated. Akbar's preference was for histories and these are full of action, rather than books of poetry, though some of these too were produced.

The next major painting project was the "Razm Namah", which was a Persian translation of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, completed 1582-88.

The experts agree that the fully developed Rajput style emerged around 1600 which is the date of the two sets of Gita Govinda illustrations (one in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and the other in the N.C. Mehta Collection), and also the two sets of Ragmalas (paintings of the different ragas, often cast in the theme of Radha and Krishna). These are the Archbishop Laud Ragmala and the other Ragmala painted in Chawinda (capital of Mewar) in 1605 (in the collection of Gopi Krishan Kanaria).

The quality that distinguishes Rajput from Mughal art is the spontaneity of the brushwork and the tension and vitality of the line. The subjects are drawn mostly from the life of Krishna, from Hindu epics, ragas and ragnis, portraits and court scenes. Other more obvious features are the difference in the jama (long coat) of which the collar was tied under the left shoulder, as against the Mughal style of tying under the right. The women wear the full heavily pleated wheel skirt, as against the Mughal ladies who wore loose trousers. The Rajput ladies wear long choli (blouse) and thin scarf. The figure formula of Rajput paintings is noteworthy: face and feet seen from side and the torso from front.

As Mughal art declined, Rajput art developed. In the 17th century, till the death of Akbar, Rajput art was confined to Amber (the court of Man Singh, nephew of Akbar's wife Jodha Bai), Mewar, the stronghold of the gallant Raja Pratap Singh, and Marwar. In the 18th century, painting was being lavishly patronized at the courts of the rajas of Bikaner, Kishenganj and Kota-Bundi.

Till the middle of the 18th century it remained no more than a provincial style of the Mughal School but from the middle of the 18th century a distinct, rich and authentic style was produced which was more poetic in subject and rhythmic in treatment than the Mughal School. By the early 19th century all the indigenous schools declined and disappeared under the onslaught of the West.



Shah Jahan on the Peacock Throne. Attributed to Govardhan. C. 1635. Size 4 1/2 X 5 in., with broad borders, here left out.

Jahangir's reign (1605-27) saw the whole mood of the Mughal School change from the heroic to the matter-of -fact, whether it be a grey-bearded dervish sitting in a village hut with a few devotees or Jahangir's own magnificent darbar (court).

The tendency towards naturalism increased because the subjects painted were drawn from contemporary life and a larger number of artists were now local men. The proportion of the human figures became more correct and women's faces became clearly distinguished from those of men, unlike the case in Persian painting. Trees began to be painted with straight trunks, mountains as solid conical masses and clouds with natural shapes. Local types of men and trees appear more and more and certain conventions came to be adopted in painting both these: profile in painting the face and bunched foliage in painting trees.

Pictures of turbulent activity give place to peaceful scenes of courtly grandeur or the pleasures of the chase . The beautiful forms of flowers, birds and animals began to be recorded more and more. A surer touch, better finish and perfect blocking were all a sign of technical advance.

Jahangir had a passion for painting and even as a prince gathered around him a circle of some of the best painters, such as Aqa Riza who had recently come from Iran. He was a caring patron and nurtured the talents of many young artists, which fact he proudly mentions in his Memoirs. Thus he refers to Abul Hasan, son of Aqa Riza, whose painting of Jahangir's Darbar was used as the frontispiece of the illustrated Memoirs. Likewise, he took personal interest in developing the talent of Manohar, son of the eminent artist Basawan.

He encouraged specialization of the artist in the direction in which he saw his talent. About Bishan Das, he says in his Memoirs, that he is unequalled in taking likenesses. Accordingly, he was sent with the embassy of Shah Alam to the court of Shah Abbas to bring pictures of the king and courtiers and animals, which he did. The famous Mansur excelled in painting flowers, birds and animals. Manohar had a special feeling for dervishes and hermits whom he painted vividly in their rural setting. He was also matchless in painting night scenes. Abul Hasan painted grand palace scenes and crowded compositions. Farrukh Beg worked in the Persian tradition, painting hills and trees in the conventional manner for outdoor scenes, and for inner scenes often using ornate buildings in the back and carpets in the front. Two new arrivals from Persia, Mohammed Nadir and Mohammed Mirza were masters of the siyah qalam (line drawings made with ink and a fine brush). Above all, the subject most encouraged and practiced was portraiture and many more portraits of the king himself and of his nobles survive from Jahangir's times than from that of any other Mughal. In fact, he encouraged his courtiers to wear his portrait on their turbans, in a brooch. He continued the compilation of the big album of portraits of all the grandees of the realm started by Akbar and called the Kitab-e-Suturg (the Big Book) which is now lost. The portraits showed increasing concern for fidelity, so unsparing that even the closeup portrait of Jahangir in the Cartier Collection of Paris, shows his somewhat hanging jowl and the sad disillusioned eyes of his later years when the rebellion of his son Prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan) brought sorrow to his father. Equestrian portraits too were an innovation of this period and are not found in Persian painting.

An imaginary meeting of Jahangir with Shah Abbas I of Persia. Painted by Bishan Das who was sent with an embassy to the court of Shah Abbas I from 1603 to 1620.



Instead of getting books illustrated (an exception was his own Memoirs) he started the practice of getting separate paintings made and compiled in albums. The most famous is one of the first half of his reign, brought from Persia in 1860 by the German Egyptologist Henrich Brugsch Pasha. It was compiled on the orders of Jahangir by Balchand and Govardhan and contains the paintings of the best Mughal painters and copies of European paintings brought by the English ambassador and by the Jesuits. This album got scattered and now only 21 folios survive in the Berlin State Library and 80 in the Tehran Museum.The ones in Berlin were published in book form with an introduction by Ernst Kuhnel and Hermann Goetz in 1924. Other muraqqas (albums) too were no doubt compiled.

The greatest charm of these muraqqas was the broad margins which besides being decorated with the traditional floral and arabesque motifs contain also whole landscapes and above all genre scenes, showing the common daily life — something entirely new and of exceeding charm and interest.



Shah Jahan (162758) got completed the great project begun by Akbar of making portrait album of all the grandees of the realm. This was done under the directorship Faqirullah and with the collaboration of such superlative portraitists as Mir Hashim Many albums of separate paintings were also compiled. The proof that paintin flourished under Shah Jahan, not only in the imperial court but under the patronage the leading noblemen is the fact that most of the Mughal miniatures in the museums the world are referable to the period of Shah Jahan. An example is the "Kevorkia Album", compiled in the 19th century, which is partly in the Metropolitan and partly i the Freer Gallery. It contains many paintings of the time of Shah Jahan and numerou copies of earlier works made in his reign. The portrait of the famous nobleman, poet an patron of poets and artists, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan, by Mir Hashim is a perfe example of the style preferred by Shah Jahan, technically faultless, highly perceptive an painted with extreme self-confidence. The borders of the pictures had become eve broader than in the times of Jahangir and were full of floral and figural decorations in soft subdued tone, as an adjunct to the main painting.

Under **Aurangzeb** (1658-1707) the imperial patronage to painting was limited to th recording of official activities of the emperor. Thus we have numerous portraits Aurangzeb and also pictures of him hunting or crossing a river or leading a campaign reading or praying. It is surprising that in most of the pictures Aurangzeb is shown as a old man. The reason may be that he gave permission for painting later in his reig Painting and painters had increased so much by his reign that they spilled over from th imperial court to the courts of provincial governors and other noblemen and from the to the bazar. According to the historian of Mughal painting, Percy Brown, art continue to flourish under Aurangzeb just as much as in the previous reigns, if not more, exce that the number of artists had greatly increased and not all were of high standard highly rewarded.

After Aurangzeb, the standard of the art declined slowly but the flame spurted twic once in the reign of **Farrukh Siyar** (1713-18) and of **Mohammad Shah** (1719-48), and aga in the time of **Shah Alam 11** (I 806-36) and to a lesser extent in the reign of the last of th Mughals, **Bahadur Shah Zafar.** Between these two peaks, there occurred the terrib holocaust of the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739. This led numerous artists to leave Del and go to Lucknow, Murshidabad and others of the provincial courts. Standards doubt declined but variety of subjects and styles greatly increased. The profusion of t work produced can be judged by the fact that a Swiss traveller by the name of Polli collected many albums of paintings from 1837 to 1857, six of which are now in Germany

The country was ravaged by the invaders from the northwest, led in 1739 by Nad Shah and from 1748 to 1761, six times by Ahmed Shah Abdali. Under the turbule conditions, the new wild military class of Sikhs rose and killed the Governor of t Punjab appointed by Abdali in 1764. Abdali came again to throw out the Sikhs and y again in 1767 but no sooner had Abdali left than the Sikhs again seized power in t Punjab and held on til1 they were quelled by the British in 1849.

As the Sikh power rose to great heights and the fame of Maharaja Ranjit Sin spread far and wide, many artists from the Punjab hill states, especially from Guler, ca to Lahore to seek their fortune. Thus a Sikh School of Painting arose, in which a famo name is that of Jiwan Ram, who painted a portrait of the one-eyed and pock-marked fa of the Maharaja. This school is known for its gaudy colours which were the colours of t dresses worn by the Sikh. Also the distinctive swords and shields and spears a daggers, and furniture and the inevitable royal umbrella, are distinguishing signs of Si painting. Portraits of people seated on chairs was a Sikh innovation and they were fo also of equestrian portraits. The painting of the period was much influenced by t European style of paintings practised by an Austrian painter who lived in Lahore for eig years, by the name of Augustus Theodore Schoeft. Very large court scenes and pala scenes and portraits painted by him can be seen in Lahore Fort.

THE RECENT PAST (1849 to 1947)

The British conquered the Punjab in 1849 and put an end to Sikh rule. In 1875 they set up the Mayo School of Art in Lahore "to encourage and promote good design, decoration and construction in all the decorative arts and applied arts, among the artisans and craft workers". Classes in drawing, woodcarving, architecture and engineering were begun, and in addition, a copper smithy was started.

But, in 1878, when work done at the school was exhibited in Paris, it was thought that this and other such schools had contributed to the collapse of Indian craft more than anything else. G. Birdwood wrote harshly in "The Industrial Arts of India" (1880):

"The chief offenders against art in India are the official departments engaged in the manufacture of jail carpets and the construction of public buildings, and, it is particularly through the neglect of native architecture and the propagation of a bastard English style followed by the people themselves, that the Government threatens slow destruction of the historical handicrafts of India."

"The only use of the talent produced in the school was to draw ewers and brass vases to be reproduced in the "Indian Journal of Art and Industry" founded in 1883. The reputed alumni of the art school that were thus employed were Sher Mohammad, Amir Bux, Mohammad Bux, Kapur Singh and Ram Singh." The last became Principal of the School in 1909.

An "Indian Art Exhibition" was held at Delhi in 1902-3. The title page of the exhibition catalogue was designed by Sher Mohammad. In the Introduction, Percy Brown wrote about miniature painting on paper and ivory being done by the artists of Delhi, and then observed as follows:

"The art described above is an indigenous art of India but an exotic form has of latter years become so prominent, and is assuming such proportions, that it needs more than passing mention. This is the oil and water colour painting now produced in no small quantity by the students and teachers of the Government schools of art. Until its introduction from Europe, there was no oil painting of any kind throughout the country, but the number of pictures executed in the medium in this exhibition, reveals the fact that oil paintings as a branch of study as well as a means of livelihood is being taken up very seriously by a rapidly increasing class. Some of the work displayed in the entrance hall was remarkably good.

"Of the School of Art style of paintings, two portraits of Punjabis by Sher Mohammad of the Lahore School of Art deserve special mention. They show knowledge of technique and a familiarity with the intricate modelling of the human face, that places them considerably above the ordinary work of this kind.

"Some idea of art activity in the Punjab can also be gathered from the details of paintings given on loan to the exhibition by collectors:

Fresco paintings of the Sikh period in the Shish Mahal of Lahore Fort.





"Ram Lal of Lahore sends a copy of the Mahabharat. Faqir Syed Qamaruddin Khan Bahadur of Lahore sends a picture of the Emperor Akbar and a copy of the Shahnamah. Mr. Sohan Lal of Lahore contributes a collection of Hindu mythological pictures. The Lahore Museum shows a selection of the old Sikh Darbar pictures. Nawab Ghulam Mahbub Subhani of Lahore shows a copy of "Pand Namah" and an illuminated copy of 'Diwan-e-Hafiz'. Bhai Hardial of Lahore contributes two illuminated books. Bhai Manohar Lal of Lahore shows ten old pictures representing the ten gurus of the Sikhs. Dewan Bhagwan Das of Lahore sends ten pictures. Raja Kirti Singh of Sheikhupura exhibits 250 old pictures drawn by the Kangra painters."

In the 1920s and 30s we find a number of artists active in Lahore, and their work was first printed in the "Modern Review" of Calcutta and then published by the Editor as "Chatterji's Picture Albums" .

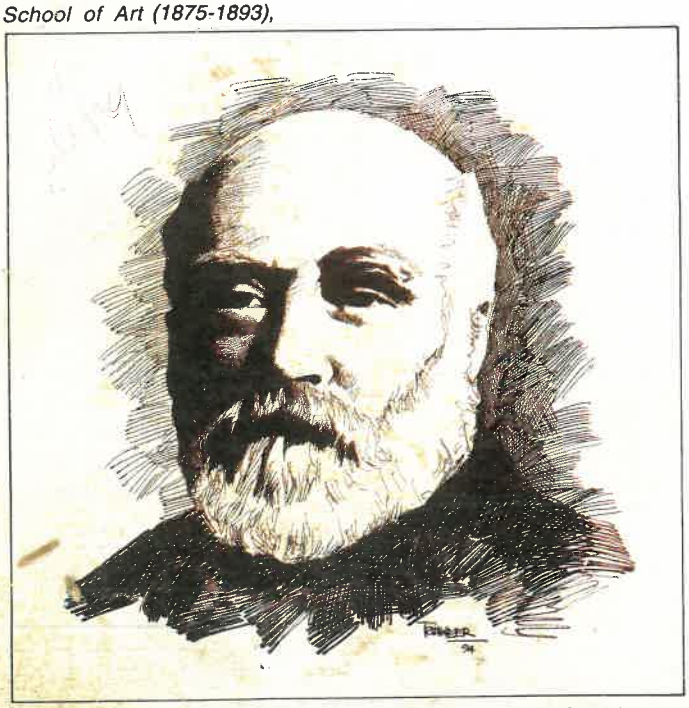
In Album No. 6 we find "Call of the Cuckoo" and "Tanboora" and "The Lamp Fails" by S. N. Gupta, who joined the Mayo School of Art as teacher in 1913 and later became the Principal and also Curator of the Lahore Museum. Gupta was a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore and brought the new Bengal School of Painting to Lahore.

We find many paintings in this style reproduced in Chatterji's Picture Albums, and some of them are by Lahore artists, such as Jalaluddin Chughtai and Abdur Rahman Chughtai. The latter became the most famous artists of Pakistan while the former completely faded out from the art world. In the Lahore Museum too there are many paintings in this style by A.R. Asghar, Salahuddin, A.N. Tagore and B.N. Tagore. An art journal by the name of "Rupam" started publishing from Calcutta in the early twenties, and the January, 1923 issue, carried the following notice:

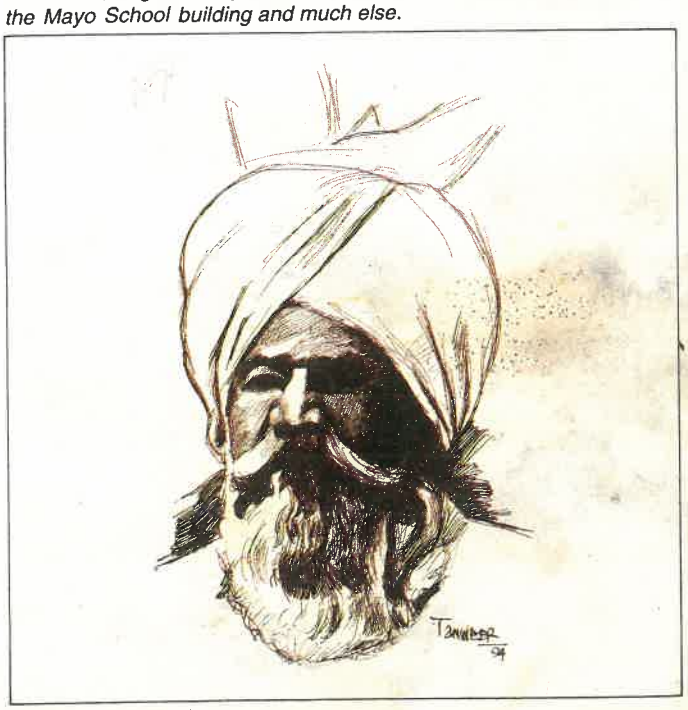
"The Punjab Fine Art Society held the first exhibition in 1923 at the Mayo School of Art. The Society functions through the exertions of Lionel Heath, Principal of the Mayo School. The Indian School of Painting, made popular by the Bengal artists, is holding its own against the class of pictures painted in the European style."

In "Rupam" of January, 1925, E.B. Havell, who was earlier Principal of the Art School of Calcutta, wrote:

John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911). First Principal of the Mayo School of Art (1875-1893),



Bhai Ram Singh, Principal of the Mayo School, 1903-13. Designed the Mayo School building and much else.



Four drawings by young artist Tanweer Farooqi

"In the Punjab section, there is far more evidence of an Indian artistic renaissance, but the painters of the Lahore School, as far as the Wembley Exhibition goes, seem to be still struggling towards self-expression without being quite sure which way they are aiming at."

Quite different was the opinion of Lionel Heath, who was Principal of the Mayo School of Art (1914-29) and the organizer of the Punjab section of the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924. He wrote as follows in his article entitled "Modern Indian Art at Wembley" in the British Empire Review:

"It is convenient to divide the art activity of India into three main sections: Bengal, Bombay, Punjab—the division made by the Indian Fine Art Committee at Wembley. Although north India has held its own in the history of painting in the past, it has been slower to develop a modern spirit of painting than either Bengal or Bombay, partly in consequence of its moorings in the past, and partly owing to its people's skill and interest in the decorative arts...

"The Punjab artists may be congratulated on having set a high standard of merit and also upon having formed a very definite style of their own. The Punjab artists are now in the forefront of this movement."

Among the Lahore artists who came in for special mention were S. N. Gupta and Roop Krishna, both pupils of Abanindranath Tagore.

About Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Heath writes:

"The new school of thought may be represented by the work of A. R. Chughtai, who shows a beauty of line and composition in his drawings that is admirable. In his paintings, his colour is simple and decorative, while the form is well expressed, as is evident from his "Devdasi", a temple dancing girl. Mr. Inayatullah, Mr. Mohammad Hussain Qadri, Mr. A. R. Asghar, are all represented by only eight paintings but it is safe to say that these exhibits leave an impression of personality and force."

This was the situation in 1924 when the British Empire Exhibition was held at Wembley.

Master Sher Mohammad. One of the group of six students who first joined the new art school. Later became teacher here. Made portraits of the Sikh rulers, some of which are still preserved in the Lahore Museum.

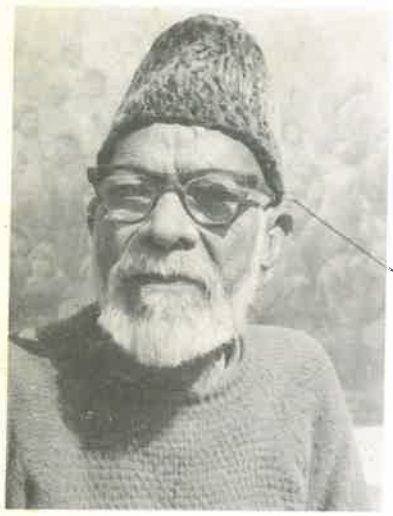


Mohammad Din (1886-1952). Made scale drawings and model of the Taj, which were presented to Emperor Frederick Wilhelm II of Germany.





Abdur Rahman Chughtai



Ustad Allahbux



Abdur Rahman Ejaz

JUST PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE

In the 30s and 40s, the only place in Pakistan where art was flourishing was Lahore. However, it is interesting to note what little activity there was in the other big cities.

In Karachi, Charanjit Singh Verdi ran an art school. Among its hundred and fifty students the only Muslim was Gul Mohammad Khatri. He practised a heavy-handed but idealized realism in the style of his teacher. Painting on glass was very popular in Karachi in those days. A younger artist was Sughra Rubabi who used to paint pictures in the wash technique and poetical style of Chughtai. She won his praise and he actually invited her to come to Lahore and learn from him but when she went to Lahore, she was not allowed even to meet him.

A well-established artist of Karachi in the 40s was Mohammad Azim, who painted in oils in the Western style. He was a good portrait painter and painted one of Sir Abdullah Haroon.

In Quetta, the most well-known artist was Syed Aziz Jan who was a painter and also a sculptor. He died around 1960 at the age of eighty. His pupil Aziz Jan contributed a painting to "The First Pakistan Biennale, 87" held in January 1988 at Lahore. His subject was the shepherds and nomads of Balochistan and its rocky landscape. Saeed Akhtar, the famous portrait painter of Lahore, also belongs to Quetta and used to take lessons from Syed Aziz Jan before he came to Lahore in 1960 to study at the National College of Art.

In Peshawar, the most prominent artist in pre-partition days was M.M. Sharif, primarily a calligrapher but also an artist and etcher.

Lahore was really the most important centre of art activity. Upto 1940 the hub of art was the Mayo School of Art. Most of the artists mentioned above, who had gained prominence in the 20s, were alumni of the Mayo School or teachers (S.N.Gupta and B.C.Sanyal) and they all painted in the new Bengal Style.However, B.C.Sanyal taught in the school(1929-36)and then set up his own studio where he painted and taught in the modern Western style.His studio was a favourite gathering place of Lahore intellectuals. He left in 1947 and settled in Delhi where he was active till the early 90s. when he also paid a short visit to Pakistan.

The work of the alumni of Mayo School, which was displayed separately as "Indian Paintings" in the many all-India exhibitions held all over India, together with the work of many other followers of this school, was often published in the Urdu literary magazines of Lahore, especially in "Nairang-e-Khayal" and "Adab-e-Latif" and "Caravan" (of which last only two issues were published in 1933 and 1934).

The work of Chughtai, Inayatullah, M.H. Qadri and A.R. Ejaz was also published in the Calcutta art journal " Rupam " and the famous general magazine "Modern Review" in the 20s, 30s and 40s. The "Chatterjee's Picture Albums brought out by the editor of "Modern Review", No.II contained paintings by M.H. Qadri and A.R. Ejaz together with work by the famous Bengali artists A.N. Tagore, Nandlal Bose and A.K. Haldar.

S.N. Gupta was the moving spirit behind this movement. When he retired from the Principalship of the Mayo School in 1942, Mian Mohammed Husain became the principal. He signed his paintings as M.H. Qadri. Outside the School, Roop Krishna was another practitioner of the Bengal Style.

A challenge to this whole group was thrown by two European women painters: by Amrita Sher-Gil in the 30s and by Anna Molka Ahmed in the 40s. Amrita (1913-41), the brilliant and beautiful daughter of a Sikh father and an Austrian mother, was a rebel. She attacked both the Western academic style popularized by Ravi Varma and the newly popular Impressionists, whose trick of using orange in the lighted areas and mauve in the shade, she derided. Of course she had no patience with the Bengal School. Her childhood was spent in Budapest, her art education years were lived in Florence and Paris, and when she came to India for a long stay in 1934, she lived mostly in Simla and Delhi. It was for very short periods that she lived in Lahore and therefore her influence on the Lahore artists was little. Only from September 1940 to December 1941 she set up her

home in Lahore. She developed a distinctive style for painting the sad faces, dark bodies and deep-dark garments of poor Indians. She died in December 1941, a few days before her exhibition was due to open in Lahore.

In 1939 another European woman artist had come to Amritsar and to Lahore in 1940. She was Anna Molka Ahmed, wife of the artist Sheikh Ahmed. She set up the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University from where a stream of graduates came out who spread all over the Punjab as art teachers in schools and colleges (after Fine Art was introduced as a subject in colleges due to Mrs. Ahmed's efforts). She practised the orange-mauve formula (not Impressionistically but Expressionistically, that is with bold brush strokes and deep rich colours) but she looked down upon the Bengali Oriental style, writing in her magazine "Vista" (1959):

S. N Gupta

"The well-known artists, Mr. Abdur Rahman Chughtai and Mr. Muhammed Husain, stand alone as the exponents of the Bengal Tagore School of water colourists imported here by Gupta. Tagore said he did not see sunshine and nor does Chughtai or Muhammed Husain. Soft harmonies of colour, dreamy eyes and languid limbs and the billowing garments of olden days seem to hypnotize us as we gaze at their work.

"But the impact of the virile painting of the younger generation awakes us. There is a tremendous change ....."

Mrs. Ahmed encouraged her students to paint village scenes and village people in a realistic way and their work bears the stamp of her training . She said "I teach my students tonal painting, that is varying of tone of colour from dark to light, but I practice colouristic painting, using colours of different light values for each shade of light and dark."

Sheikh Ahmed, Anna Molka's husband, was a highly talented artist who taught for some time in Mayo School but left in 1950 because he could not work with the Principal, Ghulam Nabi Malik, who had taken over in 1947. Sheikh Ahmed was a prominent figure in the art circles of Lahore in the 40s because he had a very social nature. His style was meticulous to a degree, the opposite of that of his wife, but he had a restless temperament and his studio was full of unfinished portraits.

After Chughtai, the most famous artist of Lahore was Ustad Allahbux. He came to Lahore in 1939 after a long stay in Bombay. Of the same age as Chughtai and equally dedicated, he too lived almost like a recluse but unlike Chughtai, he had a few pupils always working with him. His adopted son Abdul Aziz learnt to paint exactly like him while the grandson, Abdul Majid paints historical scenes based on published drawings, which he suitably modifies.

Among the younger artists, Ozzir Zuby had become well-known in Lahore for designing covers of Urdu literary books and magazines and also for modelling heads of literary figures and eminent citizens. He had a studio in Lawrence Garden (now Bagh-e-Jinnah) on a hillock which was the rendezvous of poets and artists.

Another upcoming young artist who was to become famous later, was Zubeida Agha who started taking lessons from B.C. Sanyal in 1944 and in 1946 from an Italian prisoner of war, Mario Perlingieri. She held her first exhibition in 1949 at Karachi which was quite an event in the art world because it caused much controversy in the press.

In Quetta, the most well-known artist was Syed Aziz Jan who was a painter and also a sculptor. He used to make small sculptured pieces showing common scenes of daily life, such as cock fighting, offering of prayers and so on. Some of these are preserved in the Lahore Museum. He died around 1960 at the age of eighty. His pupil Aziz Jan is still active and paints the common people and the landscape of Balochistan.

In Peshawar, the most prominent artist in these days was M.M. Sharif, who excelled in calligraphy and was also an artist and an etcher. Another commercial artist was Janbaz.

Lahore was really the only important centre of art activity in the days immediately preceding Independence. The leading artist were A. R. Chughtai, Ustad Allahbux, Haji



Amrita Sher-Gil (self-portrait).

Vina Players by Amrita Sher-Gil



Sharif and B. C. Sanyal. The last was a modern artist who maintained a studio and taught students, among whom was Zubeida Agha. He migrated to India at the time of partition and lived in Delhi till the early 90s.The others all died in the 70s. Haji Sharif taught at the Mayo School of Art from 1945 to 1966. Allahbux taught pupils at his home.

A number of other artists were working in the style of the Bengal School, of whom the most important was Sen Gupta who taught at the Mayo School of Art from 1913 onward. Others were Roop Krishna, Inayatullah, M. H. Qadri, A. R. Asghar (pseudonym of Abdur Rahim Chughtai, brother of Abdur Rahman Chughtai), and Mian Mohammad Husain who was Principal of the Mayo School from 1942 to 1946.

Mian Abdur Rahim Ejaz (1901-72) too began his career by painting in the Bengal style but after his visits to England and France, he switched over to oil painting in the Western manner.

Amrita Sher-Gil, who died in December 1941 at the age of 28 in Lahore, a few days before her paintings exhibition was held there, lived in this city very briefly — September 1940 onward— but her powerful and innovative style was a major contribution to the development of an indigenous art. In 1937 she had held an exhibition in Lahore. She was very critical of the Bengal School of painting which was popular in Lahore and she was instrumental in discouraging it. She introduced the idea of painting common daily life situations and the use of indigenous colours.

Also in Lahore in those days were some young artists who were to win fame later. Sheikh Ahmed and his wife Anna Molka Ahmed had come to Lahore from London in 1940. The former started teaching in the Mayo School of Art and the latter set up the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University in 1940. Quite prominent in those days also was Ozzir Zuby who was making sculptured heads of prominent people of Lahore such as Devi Lal and designing covers of Urdu literary books and magazines. Zubeida Agha was just beginning her career.



The Mayo School of Art

POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (1947-94)

In the early years after Independence, Abdur Rahman Chughtai and Allahbux continued to dominate the art scene.

Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894-1975) had already become famous when Pakistan came into being. His work had been displayed in exhibitions all over India. Some of it was published in the form of a book as illustrations to the verses of Ghalib. When it appeared in 1928 under the title of "Muraqqa-e-Chughtai", it was widely acclaimed.

He used the technique of successive washes of water colour initiated by the Bengal School of Abanindranath Tagore in the first decade of this century and the choice of subject was likewise poetical, literary, mythological and legendary. However, he developed a style of his own, painted bigger pictures than the Bengal School, exaggerated and stylized the figures in a very fanciful way, made much use of long rhythmic lines and created intense colour harmonies.

After Independence, some changes came over his work. Instead of painting Hindu religious and mythological subjects, he turned to Muslim history and legend. Perhaps responding to the criticism that he was wholly lost in the past, he painted such pictures as "College Girls" and "Two Modern Girls" showing "emancipated" modern girls wearing tight dresses and some without the "dupatta" or long scarf. He even provided these pictures with abstract background of rectangles which was unusual in his work. Then he also painted many pictures of the farmer with his inevitable bullock, in an effort to come close to contemporary real life. He even painted a few nudes, showing torso only.



The Quaid-e-Azam, painted by Saeed Akhta

In 1968 was published the huge volume of Chughtai's paintings illustrating the verses of Iqbal and entitled "Amal-e-Chughtai". It incorporated many of the stylistic advances of Chughtai. Instead of the dense linework and wealth of decorative detail and the romantic twilight atmosphere of the "Muraqqa-e-Chughtai', the pictures in "Amal-e-Chughtai" were simpler and bolder and aimed more at characterization than decoration. His technique also underwent a change. Instead of the successive washes of transparent water colour, he started using a tempera undercoat and localized washes.

Chughtai has left a large number of paintings and etchings which are scattered all over the world in private and public collections and many are preserved in the Chughtai Museum in Lahore. His superb drawing, unique figure stylization, meticulous decorative details and singing colours have won him his rightful place as an outstanding artist but even this updated form of our traditional miniature painting had no appeal for the rising generation of young artists in Pakistan. Therefore out of hundreds of artists working in the country today, no one has accepted his influence at all, except Hajra Mansur who uses his technique and style to some extent.

Allahbux (1895-1978) who worked as the court painter of the Maharaja of Patiala for six years, came over to Lahore in 1939. He had become very popular among the Hindus for his paintings of the blue god Krishna and his amorous frolics with the milkmaids of Brindraban. After Independence, he lost his Hindu clientele and began to paint the Punjab rural scene in an idealized form, using such subjects as ploughing, threshing, harvesting, drawing water at the well, wedding procession, festival scenes, characters from famous romances of the Punjab and so on He sees life through rose coloured glasses and his faces and figures are doll-like and characterless but his depiction of farming activity and rural scenes is authentic and powerful. He has also an uncanny ability of composing a multitude of figures in a painting, as in his remarkable "Tilism-e-Hoash Ruba" which is hanging in the Lahore Museum. He also painted a large number of paintings showing woodland scenes, with emphasis on tree trunks, in which both the individual tree and the total composition are admirably rendered.

There were two women artists who gained prominence soon after Independence. Anna Molka Ahmed (b. 1917) and Zubeida Agha (b. 1922). The first had already completed her art education at the Royal College of Art, London, when she came to Lahore in 1940, while the second went to England and France in 1951-53 for studying art, though she was already well established as an artist. Anna Molka painted realistic pictures with an Expressionistic flourish while Zubeida Agha was Surrealistic in the beginning, naively figurative in the middle, and semi-abstract later on.



Anna Molka Ahmed (self-portrait).



Zubeida Agha (self-portrait)



Ozzir Zuby

Fyzee Rahamin



Anna Molka Ahmed (1917-94). During the half century that she painted the life and landscape of Pakistan, she turned out a huge quantity of portraits, landscapes, figure compositions, pastel figure drawings, and sculptured heads. Her drawings show remarkable figure study but in her paintings the approach is very rough because the paint is daubed thick with the palette knife. Her work is characterised by boldness, great verve and intense colouring. The four huge murals (24 x 8 feet) that she painted in 1986, show her art at its best. These are entitled "The Dance of Death" "Hell", "Heaven" and "The Day of Judgement". She influenced a whole generation of women painters who studied under her at the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University during 1940-74 when she was Head of the Department. She taught her students to paint realistically the common daily scenes of village life. There was much more descriptive detail in these paintings and much less design and structure than in the work of Amrita Sher-Gil and little of the latter's characterization. On the other hand the rustic scenes of Allahbux concentrated more on the people than on the scenic setting and his people were all dolled up and idealized as if from a ballet. Anna Molka taught her students to paint more literally, showing the village folk in all their raggedness. The places were much more particularized than in Allahbux and the rendering was much more rough compared to the highly finished work of the elder artist

Zubeida Agha (b. 1922) began painting in 1944. Her early work was Surrealist, done in sombre colours with titles like "Wisdom", "Beethoven's Fifth Symphony", "Deserted Street" and so on. In 1951 she went to Europe and received art education there. On return in 1953, she began to paint figure compositions with naively simple figures and with bright colours. This did not last for long and she moved on to paint abstract pictures with just a suggestion here and there of real things and objects but rarely of people. Infact her work now is not known for human interest. Often there is a touch of mystery or a Surrealist eeriness in her paintings. Always they are very colourful. Zubeida Agha has been a lone figure in the art world, ploughing a lonely furrow, neither influencing any artist nor being influenced by any one.

Ozzir Zuby (b. 1922) was a prominent artist in the 40s, mainly as a sculptor. In 1944, he graduated from the Mayo School of Art with a diploma and till 1950 he worked in films on the side of art direction and making of sculpture. He made realistic heads of many contemporary men of letters. He also designed numerous covers for Urdu literary books and magazines. In painting in those days, he used to make shrouded figures that looked like rocks and rocks that looked like human figures. In 1950 he went to Italy for higher art education. On return from Italy in 1953, he settled in Karachi and for seven years worked as Principal of an art school and later started a school of his own for interior decoration. During all these years, he was prominent as an innovative painterly calligrapher whose work was often published in newspapers. He has illustrated the long poem of Iqbal entitled "Shikwa" in pen and ink drawings (yet unpublished). His output of paintings during the last fifty years is small and he rarely participates in group exhibitions or even national exhibitions. The only solo shows he has held were in 1954 in Lahore and 1980 in Karachi. His most important painting is a 20 ft x 6 ft mural entitled "The Awakening" which he painted in 1965 to depict the nationwide response to the attack by India on Pakistan.

The art life of Pakistan was greatly enriched by the coming from India of two eminent artists in 1947, namely Fyzee Rahamin, the mural painter, and S.H. Askari, the portrait painter. Also there came over two distinguished miniature painters, Haji Sharif (who had already come in 1945) and Ustad Shujaullah, who came in 1947. All four were loaded with honours even before they came to Pakistan.

Fyzee Rahamin lived for long in England and learned to paint portraits from the famous artist, John Singer Sargent. Then on the advice of his teacher, he gave up that style and developed one of his own based on indigenous sources. In this style he painted murals inside the dome of the Secretariat in New Delhi (North Block). On coming to Pakistan he painted only a few canvases but his great contribution was that he donated a vast collection of artifacts and all his own work which he could bring, to the Karachi Municipal Corporation, and also built a small museum on land donated by the K.M.C. This collection was the property of Rahamin and his talented wife. Atiya Fyzee, a celebrity of the early 20th century intellectual circles. It is the nucleus on which an ambitiously planned cultural complex is being built by the K.M.C.

Haji Mohammed Sharif and Ustad Shujaullah were the last of the lineage of our old masters of the miniature. Haji Sharif taught in the Mayo School (later the National College of Art) from 1945 to 1968 and also continued to paint numerous miniatures. This neglected art found a generous patron in President Ayub Khan who gave all encouragement and honour to the veteran painter.



Haji Mohammed Sharif

Ustad Shujaullah was the other notable artist who kept alive the great tradition of our miniature painting. He taught this subject in the Fine Arts Department of the University from 1961 to 1964 and then took the place of Haji Sharif after the latter's retirement in 1968, continuing till 1980. His pupil and worthy successor now is Bashir Ahmad,who has aroused unparalleled interest among the students in miniature painting and has initiated revolutionary changes in keeping with the times.

S.H. Askari retired as Vice-Principal of the Lucknow Art School and won fame as a portrait painter, especially of historical personages, Mughal queens and princesses. He painted scores of portraits of eminent public figures and numerous large formal portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam. These were all done in an academic style because he was a great admirer of Rembrandt and like him revelled in painting the dress of his models and catching the sheen and colour and texture of the stuffs.

Zainul Abedin (1917-76) shot into fame in 1943 with the macabre and moving brush-and-ink drawings of the Bengal famine that killed about three million people. Born on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra, his sensitive soul was the mirror of the rural life he saw around him and his cunning hand was the re-creator of these images of fishermen and farmers, river boats and bullock carts. He graduated from the Calcutta School of Art and taught there for some time. On the creation of Pakistan,he came and helped to set up the Government Art School in Dacca and worked as its principal(1949-68).He painted some serene views of his land like "Sail Boats", "Vegetable Market on Boat" and "Santhal Women" but he did not live long enough to develop beyond realism in the direction he was moving, as apparent from his "Two Snake-charmer Women" – a vertical composition combining the criss-crossing lines of Cubism with the swinging rhythms of Bengali folk art.



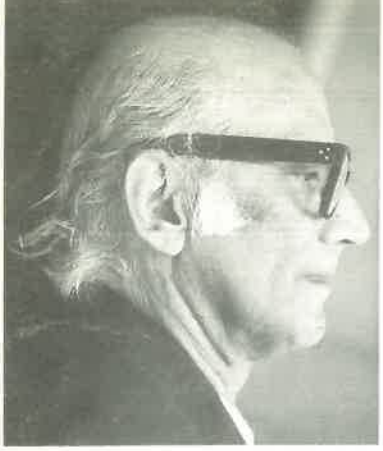
Ustad Shujaullah



Zainul Abedin



S. H. Askari









LAHORE IN THE 50S

In the early 50s, there arose a talented group of young artists in Lahore who began with realistic work but soon started doing modern painting under the influence of Shakir Ali, who joined the teaching staff of the Mayo School of Art in 1952 and later became its Principal.

Shakir Ali (1916-1975) had received the best art education at the J. J. School of Art, Bombay, the Slade School of Art, London, in Paris with Andre L'hote as also in Prague, before he came to Pakistan. He began by painting in the style of Braque, making bull's heads and still lifes in a Cubist manner. Later, he developed his own style in which he made human figures and horses and cattle by reducing them to their very basic structure, in a few clear, bold, powerful lines. He was also very fond of painting a single leaf or a few leaves or flowers in a magnified form but again he made the skeleton of its form in a few firm and sure lines, which were powerfully brushed in and angularly outlined to form rugged designs. There was masterly economy in his style and tremendous force in his line. His distortion of the natural form was based on close study of nature. He was never purely abstract but "abstracted" forms from nature with the eye of an artist. There was something sparse and sketchy and light in his work because he never fully finished his work and left much of the canvas blank. In fact, his life's work remained incomplete because he had yet to create much when he died suddenly in January, 1975, the day after he attended the funeral of Abdur Rahman Chughtai.

The Lahore Group

The young artists who suddenly became active in Lahore in the early 50s included Ahmed Parvez, Shaikh Safdar, Shemza, Qutub Shaikh, Ali Imam and Moyene Najmi. The first three were the most creative and they are all dead. Qutub Shaikh left quite early for Germany and lives there. Ali Imam has not been very productive and Moyene Najmi least of all.

Shakir Ali was much older than the above but after he joined the Mayo School as a teacher in 1952, he mixed freely with them and became an integral part of their social and artistic life. His genial temperament had attraction and his long education in London, Paris and Prague had fascination and glamour for the young artists. Both as a teacher and a friend, he exercised a decisive influence on the young Lahore artists in drawing them towards modern Cubist and abstract styles and served as a counterweight to the Realist camp whose leader was Anna Molka Ahmed and the stronghold was the Fine Arts Department of the University.

Ahmed Parvez (1926-79) was a most remarkable and prolific painter. From 1955 to 1964, he lived in London and there developed a purely abstract style in which short swift strokes, arcs and ellipses, whorls and circles, were used to build up a design that seemed to explode and erupt and fly apart but was firmly held together in a coherent pattern The design of thick black lines was filled with intense bright colours which many critics and reviewers called gems and jewels. His work is the most vibrant and animated and intense and colourful that has been produced in Pakistan.

S. Safdar (1924-84) as he signed himself, was born in Gujrat (Pakistan) but lived in Bombay from 1941 to 1948 where he learned art the hard way by working in the commercial art market. He was much influenced by the Ajanta and Ellora style drawings and paintings that he saw people doing in Bombay and his earliest work shown in Pakistan was of this type. Later, he enmeshed the same figures in a network of Cubist patterns and space divisions which made a strange but attractive combination. More convincing were these abstract space divisions when he used leaf motifs and the patterns of fields as seen from the air. Always, his drawing was strong and firm and he had an unerring sense of colour.

Shemza (1928-85) began by painting village women (like his "Jatti") whose forms were made up of triangles and other geometrical shapes and whose faces were distorted in the Cubist manner in an effort to combine the profile and the front view. The colouring was mostly flat. He also left for London in 1956 and there developed a delicate abstract linear style in which he made either a connected network or separate small forms with

single or double semicircles, C or B forms, things that looked like chessmen. Towards the end of his life he was painting another series called "Roots", in which a tree or plant was drawn in a quite fanciful manner whose roots were convoluted to look like Urdu (or Arabic) alphabet. The idea was that he was probing his Pakistani roots while living in England .

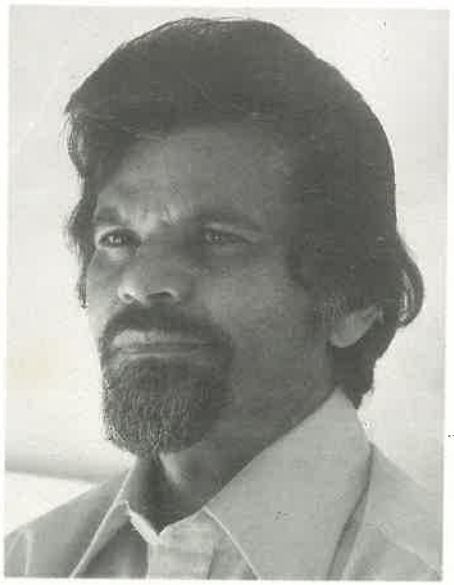
Qutub Shaikh (b. 1924) was not only a talented artist but an art promoter in the Lahore of the early 50s, but he left in 1952 for France. In 1957, he settled down in Germany. In 1980 he came and held a one-man show at Islamabad which consisted of purely abstract paintings.

Ali Imam (b. 1924) is another of this first generation of Pakistani artists and a great art promoter because from 1970 he has been running the Indus Gallery in Karachi where many of our best artists have held their first shows. He began by painting street scenes and genre paintings in water colour and gouache. Then he went to London where he lived from 1956 to 1967. On return, he developed a simple yet sophisticated style in which human figures or horses or other objects were shown in well balanced designs and painted in soft subdued greys, blues, browns and yellows and other such neutral colours. Later, this design quality became less prominent and he began painting peasant women or other women in shalwar qameez dress, with great emphasis on the texture of the paint. For this he laid pigment on pigment in related hues in such dots and patches that the lower layers glimmered through and certain colour vibrations were created. His output has been very small and he rarely ever exhibits, being largely preoccupied with the running of his Indus Gallery .

Moyene Najmi (b.1926) was another of this early group of Lahore painters. He has been more prominent as a promoter of art and helped to organize the Punjab Arts Council in Lahore. On the rare occasions that he paints, his work is semi-abstract in which architectural features are used to create Cubist effects. Just as the buildings are depicted in the form of stray glimpses, so the colour is laid on roughly, shading off at places into blank canvas. However, the total composition is delicately balanced. He hardly ever paints now.

(On opposite page, from top) *Shakir Ali*
Ahmed Parvez
S. Safdar
A. J. Shemza

Qutub Shaikh



Ali Imam



Moyene Najmi



KARACHI IN THE 50S



Fyzee Rahamin

Karachi was the capital of the new state of Pakistan from 1947 to 1962 when the seat of the government was shifted to Islamabad. A Fine Arts Society had been set up here and already by June, 1949, it was holding its sixth exhibition which was a solo show of Zubeida Agha. This was bitterly criticised in the press and also stoutly defended by some.

After Independence, two famous artists came from India to settle in Karachi. Fyzee Rahamin came from Bombay and S.H. Askari from Lucknow.

Fyzee Rahamin (1880-1964) had won fame in London as a pupil of John Singer Sargent and painted portraits that were indistinguishable from the work of his master in style. In 1925, he painted huge murals inside the dome of the Imperial Secretariat in New Delhi in a completely different Oriental style which he developed from Ajanta and Mughal paintings on the advice of his teacher. On coming to Pakistan, he painted a portrait of the governor-general, Ghulam Mohammad, and a few others but for the rest busied himself with writing books. He left behind a huge collection of his own paintings and of others, for which he built a small museum and donated the whole to Pakistan.

S.H. Askari (1907-1969) painted a lifesize portrait by Gainsborough so perfectly in 1930 that he was selected by Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, to go and copy royal portraits hanging in the Buckingham Palace. On coming to Pakistan, Askari painted portraits of President Iskander Mirza and other high dignitaries while his ceremonious portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam were much in demand for hanging in offices and public buildings. Apart from these commissioned jobs, he painted for his own satisfaction seven gorgeous paintings of Mughal princesses and queens in which the characterization is poor but the charm of the costumes is captured in all their magnificence, whether it is soft velvet or crinkly brocade or diaphanous silk.



S. H. Askari

Also came to Karachi from Amritsar immediately after partition, **A. S. Nagi and Mubarak Hussain,** portrait and landscape painters, respectively. Nagi painted exotic pictures of hill women and fishermen and snake charmers and also smooth and idealized nudes with an almost enamel finish. His studio was the rendezvous of artists and art lovers. Mubarak, who also worked in the same studio, was one of the few landscape painters in those early days. He used short diagonal strokes of related colours to build up images of trees and rocks and clouds in rather thick and bold and rough contours.

Another prominent figure in Karachi in those days was **Sultan** from Bengal who was a superb painter of landscapes in water colour. He left for Bengal in 1955, returned briefly in 1967 and then went back again.

Ajmal also was a Bengali artist who left Pakistan in the late 50s and settled abroad, returning only in the mid-80s. He was self-taught as a painter and indulged in frenzied brushwork, loud or deep dark colours, strong contrasts and extra-bold effects. There was always something exaggerated and theatrical about his work. He was basically a cartoon -ist turned painter, with a penchant for the queer and the hyperbolic.



A. S. Nagi

Sadequain and Gulgee

Two gifted artists arose in Karachi in the mid-50s who soon dominated the art scene of Pakistan. One was Sadequain (1930-87) who came dramatically into prominence when his work was displayed as "The Exhibition of an Unknown Artist" in 1955 at the residence of Shaheed Suhrawardy, then Minister for Foreign Affairs. The largest painting was a rather ornate and Oriental version of Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror" but there were also extremely simplified realistic paintings like "Sleeping Rickshaw Driver" in which thick lines and flat colours made up the whole picture.

Sadequain soon made his name as a painter of large murals in public buildings, the first of which was in Jinnah Hospital (1955) and the second at Karachi Airport (1957). In these he painted Sindhi and Balochi women with their long embroidered gowns, carrying water pitchers in delectable dance poses.

His style changed completely after he was adjudged "Laureate Biennale de Paris" in 1961 by an international jury of critics. Instead of realistic figures, he began using thorny cactus forms or curved dagger forms with which he built up single or multiple human figures. In 1968, he painted the enormous mural entitled "Saga of Labour" (180 x 23 feet) in the power house of the Mangla Dam. The human figure was painted naturalistically but in a highly stylized manner in this mural, with massive limbs enlongated to suit the design. All his work was basically linear, the colour palette being restricted and the colours flatly applied.

From 1969 to 1985, he devoted himself to calligraphy, of which he developed an entirely new style. He painted the different verses of the Sura Rahman from the Quran and made each verse into a painting. Painterly calligraphy became popular with all artists and the public in Pakistan after Sadequain began it in 1969.

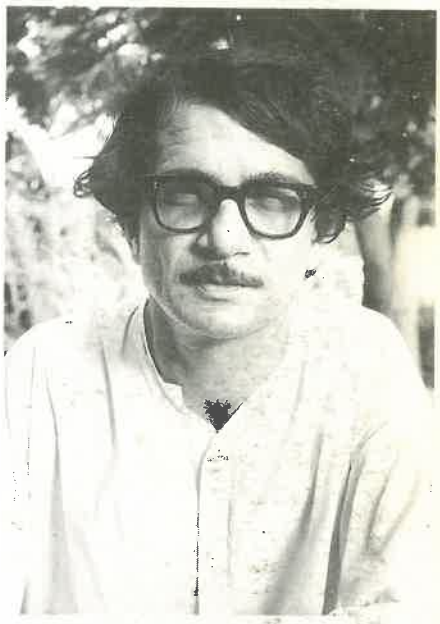
Shortly before his death, he again came back to painting and was working on the most prodigious painting project of his life on the theme of "Man and his Universe" when he died, leaving it only three-fourth complete. It has been installed on the roof of Liaquat Hall (former Frere Hall) in Karachi by Sadequain's pupil, Anwar.



Mubarak Hussain

Gulgee (b. 1926) came to prominence when a pastel sketch of the Aga Khan by him was auctioned for the highest sum, with paintings by other artists, at a Ball held in 1953 to collect funds for the Arts Council of Karachi. In 1957, he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the visiting King of Afghanistan which so pleased him that Gulgee was invited to Kabul to paint portraits of all the royal family. This he did and held his first exhibition at Kabul in 1959. Returning to Pakistan, he was commissioned to paint Queen Farah Diba of Iran, when she visited Pakistan with her husband in 1965. In 1968, he painted President Ayub Khan; and this was perhaps the last portrait he painted in oils.

Thereafter, he made portraits in coloured marble mosaic, which he began at Kabul in 1959 but later started doing in lapis lazuli (lajward). The first he made was of the King of Afghanistan and later he made portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam and of the late Aga Khan and Prince Abdullah al Faisal and of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz. Unfortunately the last was assassinated in March, 1975, just before the portrait was completed and was to be presented to him.



Sadequain

All the painting he does now is his personal variety of the American Action painting which he picked up in 1960 from an American artist who visited Pakistan. Whereas the American version consists of huge daubs and blotches and splashes of paint flung at the canvas, Gulgee is mostly linear in treatment, (though his lines are very thick)and this shows his Oriental roots. He does make a few dabs and patches but mostly he expresses himself in whiplash strokes and rhythmic lines made with a very broad brush. He laces the brush with more than one colour and as he sweeps the brush over the canvas, it leaves streaks of many colours, all beautifully mingled.

Another medium in which he has been expressing himself is free standing metal sculpture in which the verses of the Quran are moulded by him.

He also made the huge gold-plated copper crescents that now top the four minarets and the central structure of the great Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.



Gulgee









KARACHI IN THE 60S

As the art movement gathered momentum, a large number of second generation artists arose in Karachi and Lahore. The leading figures in Karachi were Jamil Naqsh, Mansur Rahi, Mansur Aye and Bashir Mirza, while others were Hajra Mansur, Laila Shahzada and Jameel Ahmed.

Jamil Naqsh (b. 1937) held his first exhibition at Lahore in 1962 and then came over to Karachi. He painted seductive nudes in statuesque poses and with stony looks, using a multicoloured stippling technique that deepened the sensuousness of the subject and gave the effect of shot colour to the surface. Later he added pigeons to the nude and the pigeons with their round sleek forms became some sort of a suggestive symbol, as they were held close to their bodies by the women. He now applies colour more evenly but with subtle gradations that render all the human anatomy as it swells and sinks. With rare command over figure drawing, he renders the human form in all its corporeality. He has an uncanny gift for catching the living, palpitating fleshly forms of women, and the warm cuddly bundle of feathers that are pigeons.

Mansur Rahi (b. 1939) began by painting very rugged, massive figures with Cubist divisions and a lot of angularity. Later he developed an abstract style in which a large number of narrow oblongs and squares and rectangles, with rounded corners, were shown sailing in a space that was suffused with light or luminous mist. It was a very subtle and sophisticated and original style. During the last three or four years, he has again reverted to figurative paintings and has been using subjects like the Afghan Refugees, War and Hunger but his figures are almost abstract geometrical forms, like ovals and triangles and rectangles, with round corners. There is tremendous force in his drawing and in the way he moulds natural forms into stylized forms. His colouring is very subtle and subdued but all is meticulously contrived and calculated. There is no emotive flourish or romantic impulsiveness in his work.

Mansur Aye (b. 1941) is an unabashed romantic. He held his first solo exhibition at Lahore in 1964 and then moved to Karachi. In the beginning he became known as the maker of moon-faced young girls with a moon in the background. The drawing was dashingly executed with a very thick brush in black and the colours were filled in large areas, almost flat. His work has progressively grown free and he affects an impulsive and carefree style in which the brush is used swingingly and the colour smeared freely. When this freedom happens to be true to the objective reality, it gives great pleasure. He is also able to imbue his work with a lot of feeling and specially when he paints musicians, which he is very fond of doing, he imparts some sort of a mystical and ecstatic feeling to them.

Bashir Mirza (b. 1941) held his first solo exhibition at Karachi in 1963. It was mostly linear work done with a thick marker. He had the same freedom and aplomb as Mansur Aye but while Mansur Aye aimed at charm, Bashir aimed at weirdness and gruesomeness as he tried to champion the cause of the downtrodden and exploited humanity. It was obvious that he had excellent command of figure drawing and could depict it in all kinds of postures. In 1971, he wandered about in Germany and on return painted two very striking series, which he called The Lonely Girl series and the Flower Girl series. In the first, almost nude females were shown in dramatic poses with billowing costumes of diaphanous material in very vivid bright colours. In the second, square canvases were filled with a woman's head or bust in one of the lower corners, and a magnified flower in the rest of the space. In 1989 he painted on big canvases some of the faces he had drawn in pen and ink in his portfolio "People of Pakistan". From 1990 till now (1995) he has been painting in thick brush strokes vigorously applied, under the influence of the Indian artist F. N. Souza, but with brighter colours and more attractive forms, though very roughly executed.

(From top): *Jamil Naqsh*
Mansur Rahi
Mansur Aye
Bashir Mirza

Hajra Mansur (b. 1946) the talented wife of Mansur Rahi, completed her education in the Government Art School of Lucknow (India) in 1964 and came over to Pakistan. She used to paint languid damsels in flowing rhythmic lines and in successive washes of water colour as introduced by the Bengal School of Abanindranath Tagore but later, no doubt under the influence of her modern-minded husband, she started placing these figures in a geometrically divided background that also enmeshed the main figures. The intersecting lines created areas that were differently coloured. The innovation was considered a successful synthesis of modern and traditional styles. She soon gave up these Cubist features and reverted to her Oriental fanciful style, refining it more and more. A figure is central but it is the web of line and colour, ingenious and rhythmic, which is the main attraction in her work.



Hajra Mansur

Laila Shahzada (1926-94) began painting in the early 60s under the guidance of A. S. Nagi and at first she painted the same exotic and romantic country lasses in gaudy colours as Nagi did. Later she developed a very personal style of painting drift wood whose strange contortions were made to suggest human figures. Still later, she turned her attention to ancient subjects drawn from the art of Moenjodaro and Gandhara, and reconstructed scenes with the help of artifacts dating from those periods. Some of these are quite imaginative and convincing. The dim dark colours suggest the hoary past and lurid lighting creates a dramatic atmosphere.

Jameel Ahmed shot into prominence suddenly in 1960 as a completely self-taught artist who painted verdant landscapes with the palette knife in a very personal technique. With a succession of short, choppy strokes, he could suggest vast flowering fields of mustard or the dense foliage of huge trees or wide stretches of water. He had an extraordinary gift of showing reflections in water. A series of personal tragedies and failing health forced him to give up painting and he died in 1986.

Mubinul Azim (1934-75) was a prominent figure on the art scene of Karachi all through the 60s. After graduation from the Dacca Art College, he came to Karachi in 1957 and left for Bangladesh in 1973 only to die there in 1975. He held his first two-man show in 1961, and another eleven one-man shows in Karachi, the last being in Nov., '71. In the beginning, like all students of Zainul Abedin, he painted boats and river scenes in water colour, and sari clad damsels, but in 1967 he surprised the art world of Karachi by his "fireworks" type of abstract paintings in which stripes of paint and occasional daubs, dashes and drops of colour seemed to explode on the canvas. It was a little like American Action painting but very Oriental in its rhythmic strokes and very Bengali with teeming vegetation. The forms were not wholly abstract but full of suggestions of up-shooting branches and sprays of flowers and tanglewoods. Some paintings suggested noisy music and wild revelry.



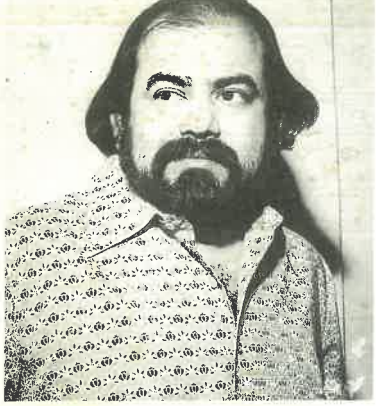
Laila Shahzada



Mubinul Azim



Jameel Ahmed











LAHORE IN THE 60S

Lahore had the good fortune to have two well-established art institutions out of which a stream of art students came from year to year. Prominent among those who made a mark in the art world are Zahoorul Akhlaque, Khalid Iqbal, Colin David, Saeed Ahmed and Ahmed Khan. All are or were teachers in the NCA.

Zahoorul Akhlaque (b. 1941) is fond of creating huge paintings and enormous sculptures in wood or metal. He is enamoured of the grid pattern and, over this abstract design, often paints small pictures in the different squares, contrasting the abstract with the concrete. Swinging to the other extreme of miniatures, he uses the decorative borders but inside is shown not the elegant life of kings and queens but the awesome mushroom of the atomic blast. In his exhibitions of 1986, 1990 and 1991 he used the format of the window within a window, dimly suggested views set within one and that within another rectangular frame. He used mostly greys and black all around, with just a glimmer of light and a touch of colour in the small square window with a mysterious view. It is all very sombre, suggestive and cerebral.

Ahmed Khan (b. 1933) is a versatile artist who works in many media. In the 70s, he was painting purely abstract pictures, using large squares and circles that filled the canvas and were painted in flat colours. Since then he has been doing very little painting but has been expressing himself in a variety of other ways, such as treating a silver foil chemically to create coloured effects on it and adding calligraphy here and there.

Colin David (b. 1937) paints full figure paintings that are not portraits so much as compositions. The figure is always at some distance and the face is not given much importance so that it is either in profile or averted. There is no idealization and the colours are neutral, almost flat. It is in the arrangement of the elements of the figure on the canvas and the total colour pattern, in which lies the appeal of the picture. He was once fond of enlivening the canvas with a small area of bright colours painted in the manner of Op Art. The main figure is usually in one corner of the large canvas.

His nudes are in another class. They are never voluptuous beauties. In fact, the subjects are often plain homely figures, looked at with the critical eye of the artist. The charm of the work lies in the disposition of the masses, the subtle gradation of the colours within a very narrow range and the air of severity, austerity and thoughtfulness with which he invests it.

Saeed Akhtar (b. 1938), on the contrary, is almost flamboyant. He also paints full figures but these are portraits in which the personality of the subject is captured by the artist rather than a design or an abstract pattern. Saeed is fond of painting large canvases in the grand style. There is a broad range of tones in his work, from the lightest to the darkest and he exploits the quality of contrast but he uses a few colours only, sometimes just one.

Khalid Iqbal (b. 1929) emerged in the early 60s as a prominent painter of portraits and landscapes but later on, he concentrated on landscape alone. He studied at the Slade School of Art, London, 1952-55 and taught at the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University, 1956-65, and at the N.C.A., 1966-81. His early pictures were usually distant views, with a broad sky and a broad foreground and in the middle a narrow strip of trees and mud houses on the horizon. Later, he started painting clumps of tall thin trees fairly close up. Brighter colours have started appearing sometimes, as in trees with red flowers. His work is very subtle and sensitive and executed with consummate skill. The exact place and time is very well captured.

(From top): *Zahoorul Akhlaque*
Ahmed Khan
Colin David
Saeed Akhtar
Khalid Iqbal

KARACHI IN THE 70S

The artists discussed above have now (1995) a standing of about thirtyfive years and are dominating the art scene of Pakistan. However, a large number of highly talented artists came up in the 70s and they have already made a name for themselves. Among them the most prominent are Eqbal Mehdi, the portrait painter, Shakeel Siddiqui, the super-realist still-life painter, the abstract artists Mashkoor Raza, Tariq Javed, Qudsia Nisar and Maqsood Ali, the semi-abstract landscape painter Zaheen Ahmed, and Nahid whose paintings are thickly textured, deeply colourful, with lurking imagery and some theme.

Eqbal Mehdi (b. 1945) is a most outstanding portrait artist in oils and pen and ink. His output is enormous but much of it is commissioned work like painting portraits of national heroes and civil and military personages. This is really commercial work but still he has found time to paint scores of portraits to express his true art. He is fond of painting teenage girls and captures well their fresh looks and shy character. His many exhibitions have been acclaimed abroad as well as in Pakistan.

Maqsood Ali (b. 1935) held his first one-man show in 1969 and since then has carried on a passionate love affair with Sindhi subjects and motifs. At first he painted them realistically but then disengaged some abstract elements, especially the square patterns of Sindhi embroidery, to create non-objective paintings of great charm.

Mashkoor Raza (b.1950) is the most popular and prolific abstract painter who has developed a striking style of his own. In the centre of his composition he paints triangular forms in light blue that look like transparent shards of glass or ice. Where these enmesh, he spatters dark colours that contrast with the light colours of the main forms. Lately, he has tried to introduce some figurative elements like female nudes or horses, but this has not clicked.

Tariq Javed (b. 1952) is another distinguished stylist among our abstract painters. He used (in late 80s) ovals and elliptical forms that intersect and create various areas. These are coloured flat but stippled. He often uses abstract geometrical forms that are found in real life such as kites, domes, triangular roofs of huts and so on. Lately, he has been introducing a horizon and huts and human figures to create a landscape effect in an abstract style. After 1990 he reverted to pure abstraction but began using swinging gestural strokes with a thick brush.

Shakeel Siddiqui (b. 1951) has made a name for himself as a super-realist who paints still life with uncanny verisimilitude. He has also painted portraits but these are not so impressive as his other work.







(On right, from top); Eqbal Mehdi; Maqsood Ali; Mashkoor Raza; Tariq Javed. (Below, from left); Hajra Mansur, Ali Imam; Sumbul Nazir; Nahid; unknown; unknown; Mehr Afroz; Tariq Javed; Shakeel Siddiqui; Wahab Jaffer; Bashir Mirza.













Qudsia Nisar (b. 1948) is the only artist doing pure abstract work in water colour. She applies lighthearted brush strokes in a sketchy way to create arcs and loops and wiggles and zigzags, while leaving some of the paper blank. Some areas are covered with light washes but often there are blank thick lines running through them created by using masking fluid before applying colour over that area. In each painting, she has some theme but the abstract beauty of the work can be appreciated independently of that.

Mehr Afroz (b. 1948) till 1990 taught at the Central Institute of Art, Karachi, where Qudsia also teaches. Afroz was the leading graphic artist of Pakistan in the 80s and regularly won prizes in the national exhibitions for her etchings, which are purely abstract. In January, 1987, for the first time, she put up a solo exhibition of paintings done in mixed media, and in February, 1990, she mounted her second such exhibition. Afroz's work is the opposite of Qudsia's. The latter is joyously impulsive and recklessly free, using light tones of bright transparent colours. The work of the former is studied and coolly calculated, with never a flourish or a free stroke, while the colours are dark and thick and opaque. Her paintings are not abstract like her etchings for she uses faces and figures but as bare suggestions and symbols. With her latest (1995) "Amulet Series", she has reverted to abstraction that contains suggestions of things and human life.

Nahid Raza: (b. 1949) graduated from the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi in 1970 and in the same year put up a solo exhibition of her paintings which were purely abstract. Soon she introduced into her paintings designs and motifs from Sindhi handicrafts. Later, from 1980 to '85, she used the geometrical and also figurative carvings of the Chowkhandi Tombs (in suburbs of Karachi) as motifs in her paintings. Around 1985 she espoused the cause of women and every painting had female faces or figures lurking in the dark deep impasto paint which she ground thick on the canvas in a secret technique, always in a dominantly red tonality. The figure drawing has improved with time. The charm of her work lies in the ingenious design and the rich and varied colours, rather than the subject.

Lubna Agha graduated from the Karachi School of Art in 1967 and began painting daily life scenes. In 1971 she gave a surprise by putting up an exhibition of purely abstract paintings in which big and small blobs of white paint edged with touches of green or blue were set off with a base of large areas of other colours. It at once caught the imagination of the public and she became popular overnight. In 1981 she married and migrated to the USA. She came and held an exhibition of her latest work in 1986. The notable feature of the new compositions was hands and arms reaching out from all sides. She stated that her paintings represented the inner turmoil resulting from separation from her spiritual and material moorings.

Riffat Alvi (b. 1948) graduated from the Karachi School of Art in 1974 but held her first solo exhibition in 1985. She is a non-figurative painter. First she painted large oblong patches of colour in the manner of Rothko. Then she introduced an indigenous element into this same style by using images drawn from the archaeological finds of Moenjodaro. In her solo show held in 1989, she again went purely abstract and made curving, wriggling, spiralling forms by rubbing graphite and pastel on coloured pastel paper. From her visit to Zimbabwe in 1991, she learned to use soil colours and painted compositions with some motifs and features drawn from our ancient civilizations, using earth from the very sites.

Zaheen Ahmed (b. 1944) is an adept water colourist who passed from the Karachi School of Art in 1974 and now teaches there. His output is small and he has not been able to put up a solo exhibition but often exhibits in group shows. He paints houses, old monuments and landscapes but he takes great liberties with the subject so that the painting ends up with misty washes and sweeping brush strokes as in Chinese landscape paintings, but more free, impulsive and modern.

(From top): *Qudsia Nisar*
Mehr Afroz
Nahid
Riffat Alvi

LAHORE IN THE 70S

The most prominent artists to have arisen in Lahore in the 70s are Ghulam Rasul, Ajaz Anwar, Jimmy Engineer, Zubeida Javed, Ijaz-ul-Hassan and Askari Mian Irani.

Ghulam Rasul (b. 1942), a prolific landscape painter is another former pupil of Anna Molka Ahmed. He passed his M.A. Fine Arts from the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University in 1964 but he unlearned what he had learnt there when he went for higher studies in art to the USA. When he returned in 1972, he had developed a distinct style of his own in which indigenous features were emphasised. This meant both the local scene, the trees, the houses, the people, the animals and also certain qualities of style drawn from the traditional miniature painting. For some years he painted peopled village scenes in which the different areas were clearly outlined and filled with flat colours. The colours were pure, unmixed with white. Later, he gave up these separate outlined areas and also these scenes of life in the villages and began to paint verdant scenes of trees and fields, in which people were not prominent although buffaloes occur very often. The colour treatment is tonal and not flat. The forms of the trees are much exaggerated and magnified. The colours also are arbitrarily changed. For example, trees may be painted purple, a colour of which he is very fond.

Ajaz Anwar (b. 1946) has gained well-deserved prominence for his large water colour paintings of the streets of old Lahore. He revels in depicting the carved wooden balconies and the ornate plaster mouldings of the old buildings with numerous other details of the crowded bazars but he manages to subordinate all the details to an overall design and to maintain tonal harmony despite so much variety of detail. There is no free flow of colour and no stroke work in his paintings because they are meticulously and studiously crafted.

Jimmy Engineer (b.1957) was only seventeen when he painted two huge long panels on the epical subject of the great migration that took place at the time of the partition of the subcontinent. He painted five more such in 1982. Making allowance for his youthfulness and for the fact that he is largely self-taught (for he left before completing his education at the National College of Art, Lahore), it must be recognized as a remarkable achievement to paint such a multitudinous scene with scores of figures in a variety of poses and yet to compose it coherently and draw it correctly and paint harmoniously. The sheer ingenuity with which so many details have been filled in is impressive.



National College of Art, Lahore

Ghulam Rasul



Ajaz Anwar



Jimmy Engineer





Askari Mian Irani (b. 1940) graduated in Design from the National College of Art in 1967 and held his earliest one-man shows in 1969 and 1970. At first he was painting landscapes.Then his training as designer asserted itself and he was creating paintings that were more like textile designs. It was in the late 70s that he achieved a balance between the painterly and the design elements. It was at this stage that he started using Arabic alphabets, especially the word Allah as an element of design. This trend gradually matured in the 80s and he created compositions in which Islamic architectural features and scattered Arabic words of religious significance were woven into the design. Dripping colours enlivened the painting.



Ijazul Hassan (b. 1940) may be considered as one of the artists to arise in Lahore in the 70s because he had already held four solo exhibitions by 1980 but actually he came into prominence only in the 80s when he changed his subject. At first he was painting people because he was much moved by the social and political movements of the early 70s and wanted to "express the aspirations of the people", as he has himself written. However, he came to notice only when he gave up his social approach for an aesthetic one and began to paint trees and plants in closeup views, leaf by leaf and flower by flower. Though his work is quite literal, it is enlivened by light effects which are appropriately varied and by apt indication of receding planes and distance. The layout is neatly balanced, and the picture is often divided into panels.



Zubeida Javed (b. 1937) obtained her M.A. Fine Arts degree from the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University in 1961 and has been teaching there since. She was too much involved in teaching to do much painting, so that her first solo exhibition was held as late as 1975 in Rawalpindi and her second in 1981 in Karachi. Since then she has not been able to mount another solo exhibition because she never had enough paintings to show. However whenever she put up her work in a group show, she impressed the viewers as a subtle landscapist who exploits fully the play of light and shadow in such a way as to give a touch of mystery. Also, there are often hints of Cubist space divisions and much of the picture is abstract except for a few recognizable features. Her colours are deep, dark and rich in which even a little play of light becomes very prominent.

(From top): *Askari Mian Irani*
Ijazul Hassan
Zubeida Javed
Landscape by Zubeida Javed



LAHORE IN THE 80S

The artists who made their mark in the 80s in Lahore include Salima Hashmi, Ghulam Mustafa, Anwar Saeed, Shahid Jalal, Dr. Khalid Mahmud, Mussarrat Nahid, Iqbal Hussain, Pirzada Najamul Hasan and Nazir Ahmed.

Salima Hashmi (b. 1942) acquired her art education first at Lahore (NCA 1960-62) and then at Bristol (UK) 1960-65, but her first solo show was held in 1980 because she was preoccupied in many other artistic and cultural activities, such as photography, theatre, TV and teaching — at the National College of Art, Lahore since 1970. In 1989-90 she studied at the Rhode Island School of Design (USA) and in 1995 was appointed Principal of NCA. She has sought in her paintings to protest against tyranny and especially against oppression of women, largely in a suggestive manner, with much use of symbols. — such as prison bars, prints of bleeding hands, red-lined or blood-shot storm clouds.

Ghulam Mustafa (b.1952) obtained his Diploma in Fine Art from the National College of Art in 1974 and participated in many group shows but his first solo exhibition was held in 1987. In this he put up a number of oil paintings of the old monuments of Lahore seen from unusual angles and in a new light. In 1990 he started painting in pastel the street scenes of Lahore, especially the dark and narrow alleys inside the walled city. This subjects became popular with all the landscape painters of Lahore.

Anwar Saeed (b.) graduated from the N.C.A., in 1978 and soon made his mark in the 80s by striking out an entirely new path: the exploration of the subconscious mind in painting. (See page 270).

Shahid Jalal (b.1940) is a largely self-taught artist who is by profession a chartered accountant and studied only briefly at the N.C.A., Lahore. His favourite subject for long was garden scenes in which a small section of plants and flower beds used to be painted in close-up. Though his pictures were large, his love of detail and penchant for depicting flowerbeds minutely reminded one of miniature paintings. He paints both in oil and water colour but the style is similar because he applies the colour thick in small daubs and patches. The colours are deep, and saturated. There is play of light in the water colours but hardly any in the oils. Distance is not much emphasized and the scene is closely packed. He is now painting bigger and broader views.

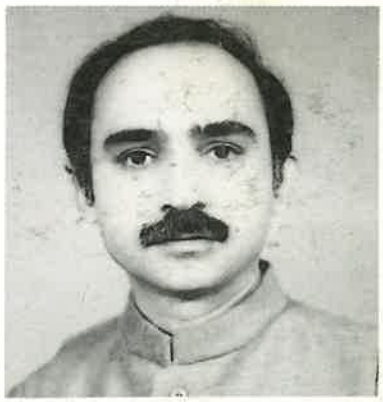
Dr. Khalid Mahmud (b. 1936) got his B.F.A. degree from the Punjab University in 1960, and also a law degree. After practicing law till 1962, he obtained his M.F.A. degree in 1964. He was in Hawaii University 1967-69 studying art history. In 1975 he became Head of Fine Arts Department, Punjab University. It was in 1981 that he attracted notice by his solo shows at Lahore and Islamabad and by participating in the Asian Art Exhibition in Bangladesh . In 1982 he won the 3rd prize in the National Art Exhibition with a painting that caught the general effect of a street scene viewed from above, as a medley of shimmering colours rather than any clear images. Panoramic street scenes by night and day have become associated with his name and he does them well.

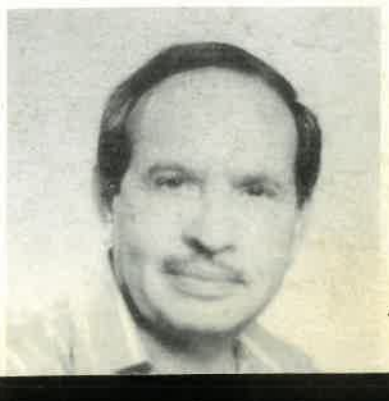
(From top): Salima Hashmi; Ghulam Mustafa; Anwar Saeed; Shahid Jalal; Dr. Khalid Mahmud
(Below) Painting by Dr. Khalid Mahmud

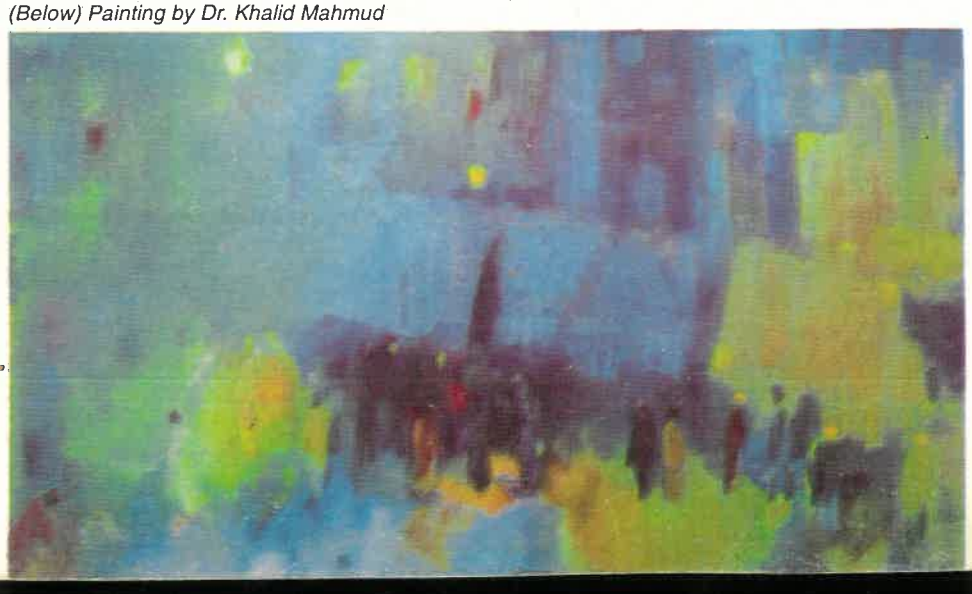


















Mussarrat Nahid (b. 1958) earned her M.F.A. from the Punjab University around 1980, and inevitably became a landscape painter. She could only paint casually because of her employment in the Pakistan National Council of the Arts but she often took part in group exhibitions. She tried her hand at various subjects but finally found her ideal in fish and submarine scenery which offered endless scope for painting light and colour. She confesses "The abstraction of nature, the simplification of objects, the use of rich colour, their vitality and variety, provoke in me feelings of excitement, joy and ecstasy. French Impressionism is the major source of my inspiration. Colours play a very prominent part in my painting"

Iqbal Hussain (b. 1950) obtained his diploma in Fine Arts from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1974 but he started exhibiting in group shows and in solo exhibitions only in 1981. He paints female figures and figure compositions, especially fallen women of the red light area, often emphasising the pathos of their life and its seamy side. He captures well the character of each face and renders skilfully the varying light effects on the changing planes. There is an engaging looseness and patchiness in his colour application but this freedom is well under control.



Pirzada Najamul Hasan (b.1951) graduated in Fine Art from the Karachi School of Art and held his first one-man show in 1980 at Lahore, where he lives. He developed a simple but quite distinctive style of landscape painting in water colour in which he gave great prominence to dark rain clouds whose edges fade out in watery washes. There is always a broad sky in his landscapes. On the horizon is a narrow strip of greenery in which he often scratches out the thin trunk and branches of a leafless tree. In 1989 he broadened out the subject to include mountain scenes and old monuments

Nazir Ahmed (b.1952) qualified from the N.C.A. in 1976 and held his first solo show in 1978. He paints large panoramic scenes of rural Punjab in long, narrow panels. Often in his paintings, there is a broad sky above and a broad belt of water or plain ground below. In the middle, on the horizon is a narrow band of mud houses and a row of trees. A grey-blue tonality is dominant. It is soft, subdued and refined work.





KARACHI IN THE 80S

Najmi Sura (b. 1951) holds a very important place in the art world of Pakistan because she is trying to evolve a modern style out of our traditional miniature painting. First, she has enlarged it to the size of an easel painting. Then she uses the oil medium. Again, she retains the meticulous rhythmic figure drawing of our olden art and its many formal poses but adds flesh and blood to the stiff figures of yester-years. The layout of some of the complex compositions is very modern and so is the rough textural eftect of the colour in the background, which is sometimes left half finished. Her best work is the nude or semi-nude figures in which the true depiction of the fleshy females and the smooth flow of rhythmic lines is extraordinary.

Ghalib Baqar (b. 1956) graduated from the Karachi School of Art in 1975. For many years he taught art in the Art Council of Quetta (Idara-e-Saqafat) but gained recognition only after he moved to Karachi and held his first solo show here in 1983. The same year he won the First Prize in the Sindh Artists Annual Show and again in 1984 in the Abasin Art Council Annual Show at Peshawar. He became nationally prominent after winning the First Prize for Water Colour Painting in the First Pakistan Art Biennale '87. This prize-winning entry marked his departure from realistic landscape painting to a creatively and imaginatively conceived landscape.

Abdul Hayee (b. 1948) is also a product of the KSA (1971) and has been quietly painting water colour landscapes on location, a practice he initiated and in which he was joined by a group including Ghalib Baqar, Mansur Aye, Zahin Ahmed, M. Yusuf, Manzoorul Hussain and Mukhtar Haider. The first three have struck out new paths away from realism but Hayee has pursued the same style with increasing freedom and fluency. His first one-man show of 1994 was a sellout.

Athar Jamal (b. 1952) is a most popular water colourist who paints genre pictures, that is glimpses of the daily life of common people, especially rustic men and women and gypsies. He catches excellently the character on the faces of these simple folk and all the subtle effects of light on the face and the clothes.

Kaukab Barni (b. 1958) began by using whole and broken vases as motif but now she has introduced into her work motifs of Sindhi embroidery since these too are abstract but in a traditional way. Sometimes she even pastes pieces of these on her oil paintings, as collage. This gives an indigenous touch to her work.

(On right, from top): Najmi Sura; Ghalib Baqar; Abdul Hayee; Athar Jamal.
(On opposite page from top); Mussarrat Nahid, facing her painting; Iqbal Hussain; Pirzada Najamul Hasan; Nazir Ahmad and his painting (Below): Kaukab Barni with her painting.













Wahab Jaffer (b. 1941) was a late entrant into art but now he is one of the recognised abstract artists. He is painting large canvases with acrylic paint in bright colours in such a way that a grainy effect is produced as in pastels. Though his compositions are pure abstract, they suggest big canna flowers with large dishevelled petals. The famous Indian artist F.N. Souza said it all with his remark, "It is always Christmas in Wahab's paintings." However, in his December 1994 exhibition, many of his paintings were in monochrome sepia with much use of white. Those somewhat more colourful had heavy areas of burnt umber and again much white.



Amar Jamal (b.1961) sister of Amber and wife of Athar Jamal, also obtained her diploma in art in 1981. She used to paint figure compositions in an Impressionist style but her solo exhibition (1990) was almost abstract although a bunch of croton leaves was used in each painting as the ostensible subject. This occupied only a small part of the paper and the rest was full of play of colour and attractive light effects and interesting space divisions that created abstract forms. Her 1993 exhibition at Islamabad comprised flower studies. In 1994 crotons continue to feature prominently in her paintings.

Amber Aslam (b. 1962) graduated from the Karachi School of Art in 1981 and has been actively taking part in group shows all along, though her first solo exhibition was held in 1989. She used to paint still life in a semi-abstract way in oils but for the last couple of years, she has been using the gold fish as a motif or rather as an excuse on which to hang her abstract compositions. She has been receiving guidance from senior artist Jamil Naqsh and her colours have become enlivened as a result.

Sumbul Nazir (b. 1951) excels in painting nudes in water colour. She does no stroke work but rather gently dabs in the colour on half wet paper so that it runs at the edges and fades off or merges with another colour in soft gradations. She has a free and easy style and her command of figure drawing is excellent.









(From top): *Wahab Jaffer*
Amar Jamal
Her work
Amber Aslam
Her Work
Sumbul Nazir

KARACHI IN THE 90S

By the 90s, Karachi had become the art capital of Pakistan with four well-established private art institutions (Karachi Art School, Central Institute of Art and Craft, the North City Art School and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture) besides smaller art centres being run by artists, such as Nahid's "Studio Art", and Mashkoor Raza's "Mashkoor Art School", and many others. The half a dozen private art galleries too played an important role in promoting art. by bringing together artists and art lovers.

Naiza Khan graduated in Fine Art from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University,1987-90. Coming to Pakistan, she participated in group shows and revels in the use of line even in her paintings — sweeping, swinging lines that play around the figure, trying to capture the image in repeated sallies. Each suggests vibrations, movements, life, which one precise, hard line could not. Equally important in her paintings is the play of light and the ambience which she catches in subtly varied and freely applied colour. She seems to be fond of drawing and painting shrouded figures which have an air of mystery. The same is true of the four small paintings of windows through whose bars is visible a lighted interior without any people. The exterior is dark and sombre. Still more awesome is the triptych: "All the world's a stage" in whose central panel sit a number of swathed women with bowed heads while the panels on either side show low bleak hills and (perhaps) scattered corpses, signs of carnage. This elegiac and solemn piece seems to be inspired by a Muharram "majlis" or gathering, mourning the tragic battle of Kerbala.

Naheed Afridi made her mark when she won the First Prize at the Sindh Artists' Exhibition organized by the Karachi Arts Council in 1990. After earning her B.A. degree in 1980, from Karachi University, she went to the USA and studied art at the Cornish Institute of Allied Arts, Seattle, obtaining two certificates in Drawing and Ceramic Designing. Coming back to Pakistan, she joined the Karachi School of Art and stood first in the Diploma examination in 1987. She put up her first solo exhibition in 1992 at Karachi which was a colour extravaganza in which human figures were barely suggested. She says she is much influenced by the Fauves (Matisse, Derain. Vlamink) so named by an art critic because they appeared to him like "wild beasts" by their wild colour and uncouth vigour. Naheed is not all that wild because some of the figure compositions are quite carefully executed but the work is no doubt very colourful and full of verve. She is now teaching at the Karachi School of Art.

Rooha Ghaznavi was a wellknown photographer, in great demand with fashion magazines when her old simmering love of art burst the lid and forced her to abandon the camera and pick up the brush. Earlier, she had attended some art classes for casual students at the Arts Council, Karachi, but it must be on the basis of native talent that she emerged as an authentic artist at her first solo exhibition at Karachi in 1994.

She paints faces and not figures, and makes use of strong light effects, which dramatises the picture. However, for tender scenes of man and woman holding hands, she uses what in photography is called reflected light, subdued and pellucid. Understandably, her subject is often woman, mostly dismayed and distraught, even horrified. The dark colours and strong contrasts which she uses in painting the faces and the whole picture enhance the same effect.













(From top): Painting by Naiza Khan ; Naiza Khan; Naheed Afridi; Painting by Naheed Afridi
(Bottom, from left): Rooha Ghaznavi; Painting by her.







Masuma Halai Khawaja (b.1967 at Karachi) graduated in Fine Arts from the N.C.A, Lahore, in 1990, majoring in Painting. She captured public attention when she entered a striking figure composition in a special show of the work of 50 women artists on Women's Day, l 991, held in the National Gallery, Islamabad. She had painted a woman, largely hidden in piles of bed linen, with only one leg partly visible and one palm upraised, big and prominent, as if crying " Stop, stop ! " . It was a powerful statement against repression, rendered in a new and skilful way. Still more powerful is her "Private Inferno" which shows flames leaping at a woman's face.

Moeen Faruqi is another new artist who came into the limelight when his first solo exhibition was held at Karachi in 1993, although he had been taking part in group shows since 1989. His work is figurative and thematic and he is deeply exercised by the human estate, in particular by the city dweller lost in urban conglomerations. He has devised a human imagery of his own (head tapering down to a pointed chin, thin neck and spindly limbs) which serves his purpose. The upraised pupils of the sad eyes express the heavy weight of alienation when the individual is lost in a crowd, especially when he is a displaced person. Primarily an educationist and a recognized poet, he is a self-taught artist. He impresses more by the drama he depicts and the feelings he conveys than by his technical skill.

Mona Naqsh (b. 1968) exhibited her first painting in an art gallery in 1987 but came into prominence in the 90s. She has the benefit of constant guidance from her father, the eminent figure painter, Jamil Naqsh. Mona selected flowers as the subject of her paintings and thus filled a void in the art scene. If the American woman artist Georgia O'Keefe, could build up such a high reputation with her much enlarged and thought-imbued flowers, why not a Pakistani artist? The flamboyance of colouring and philosophical approach of O'Keefe is here replaced by soft and subtle colouring which is pervasive to the elimination of lines. However, the huge bunches of same flowers that she paints create a saturation and profusion of colour that is not dainty and delicate but lavish and overpowering. Far from the botanical exactness of the olden Mughal flower studies, she seems to merge masses of flowers to create a burst of colour. The big crystal vase she invariably uses provides an excuse for bewildering play of light and colour. She has still much to learn and new directions to explore but the beginning is promising.

(From top): *Painting by Masuma Halai*
Masuma Halai
Moeen Faruqi
Painting by Moeen Faruqi
Mona Naqsh: painting by her.







LAHORE IN THE 90S

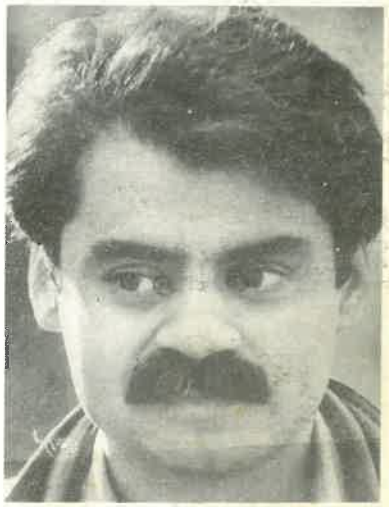
The stream of art has been swelling in Pakistan, with the passage of time. By 1994 art here had gained enough stature for a major exhibition of Pakistani artists to be held at the Pacific-Asia Museum of Art, Pasadena, Calif., USA. and another, of Pakistan's women artists, at Bradford, UK.

Quddus Mirza (b .1961) has had the benefit of education in traditional and modern art (N.C.A., Lahore,1986; Jaipur. India,1988; and Royal College of Art, London, 1991). Returning to Lahore, he has held solo exhibitions there and at Islamabad in 1987 and 1988 but may be said to have "arrived" in the 90s. He affects a very avant garde style in which brilliant colours are used to paint persons and things with the naivete and engaging awkwardness of a child (as "Homage to a Girl Holding Flowers") or esoteric compositions with diverse objects (a cloud burst, a fearful red-turbaned head, table with two knives, three chairs) which are loaded with a subjective symbolism. This painting was in his recent exhibition (1994) at Karachi. Knives and chairs are images, signifying tyranny and authority

Dure Waseem (b.1964) has brought new freshness of colour, freedom of colour application, and informality of pose to figure painting. Her attractive entry in the National Exhibition 1994, "Zareena", was another of the pleasant surprises.

Sabir Nazar, a 1988 graduate of the NCA, is yet another example of our artists seeking their roots in the soil - in this case recalling and recreating pictorially the folk legends that are woven into the fabric of our minds. He has developed an appropriately simple and naive and folksy style for these creations, basically linear and flat coloured. Like almost all Lahore artists, he cannot resist painting landscapes and street scenes but as yet his work is rather conventional and lacks distinction, perhaps because his heart is not in it.





(From top): Painting by Quddus Mirza
Quddus Mirza
Painting by Dure Waseem
Dure Waseem
(On right): Sabir Nazar
(Below): Painting by Sabir Nazar











Shazia Sikander (b. 1969) graduated from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1993, majoring in Miniature Painting. Her teacher Prof. Bashir Ahmad, who has been teaching since 1980, considers her the best student he has ever had. The painting she made for her final examination was a 14 in. x 60 in. scroll in which she had used a contemporary rather than traditional subject, namely her own daily life. Showing a sequence of events in one picture is an old tradition of miniature painting. While the olden artists divided one rectangular picture into many areas with the help of rocks or trees or buildings, Shazia has used the modern series of "frames" as in films or cartoon strips but the lower half of the frames is merged together.

Each shows her in many situations and backgrounds, with herself in a white dress, back to the viewer. The old two-dimensional treatment has been retained but in place of the olden poetical or grand themes are common daily life scenes. She is now (1995) studying for her M.A. degree in the Rhode Island School of Design, USA ..

Hasnain Malik obtained her Masters in Fine Arts degree from the Punjab University in 1984. She has not come up with a full solo exhibition so far (1994) but whenever she has exhibited in group shows. her wholly original abstract paintings have impressed by their unconventional compositions, powerful brushwork and smooth transition from colour to colour. Occasionally, she uses plant forms as elements of a design and not descriptively. In her first solo exhibition at Islamabad in March 1995 she put up landscapes and also "paintings" of music, made "by the ear", with closed eyes. This is a continuation of the old Ragmala miniature paintings but inspired by Western music.





(From top): Painting by Shazia Sikander, showing a woman of today standing in a ruined old haveli (old time mansion); Shazia Sikander; Hasnain Malik; a painting by her.



ISLAMABAD IN THE 80S AND 90S

Islamabad has also become an important centre of art as a number of artists have settled there, like Mansur Rahi, Hajra Mansur, Jamal Shah, Zubeida Agha, Ghulam Rasul, Jamila Masud, Jamila Zaidi, Mussarrat Nahid and some local-born artists such as the landscapist of the Potohar region, Rashid Khan, and the Surrealist, Rahat Saeed.

Jamila Masud (b. 1934, Gujranwala) stood first in the M.A. (English) examination of the Punjab University in 1956. She studied sculpture, drawing and painting at the Art Students' League, New York in 1981 and soon gained prominence by participating in many national and international group shows and holding solo exhibitions in Islamabad, Lahore, New York and Washington D.C. She has painted series after series on different subjects but is always down to earth. Thus in her series "Aas Paas" (Surroundings) she has painted cows and buffaloes or artisans at work. In her "Garden" series she has painted her own lovely home garden. In 1990 however she succumbed to the charm of the old decaying houses inside the walled city of Lahore and the neighbouring vilage Eminabad. The old-world charm of the wood carving, plaster moulding and stone or brick carving on the doors, windows and balconies fascinated her and the fast decay overtaking them touched her heart. The result was a series of mixed media paintings called "Vanishing Visions" in which she has tried to capture the charm and also the sadness of the scene in loving detail. Done from photographs, she has added the patina of aging structures and the roughness of crumbling stone and plaster with subtle variations of colour.

JAMAL SHAH (b.1955) was one of the founders of the Fine Art Department when it was set up in the Balochistan University in 1984. However, in 1986, he left for London to join the Slade School of Art and from there he obtained a postgraduate degree in print making. When he first participated in the National Art Exhibition of 1984, it was as a sculptor but all his work had a theme and the theme was man's suffering and struggle and constant aspiration. In the First Art Biennial of Pakistan 1987, he entered two large prints and two very big canvases. The prints were dim, dark and tragic. The paintings showed agonized figures in the lurid light of fire and flames. Early in 1988, he held an exhibition of his etchings and lithographs at Karachi and these were again dark and sombre creations with tragic themes. It was noted then that "most of the prints are powerful, emotional portrayals of social injustices, psychological turmoil and pain. executed with a rare technical expertise and vitality" While his output of prints adds up to an impressive and powerful body of work, his biggest single creation is a 133 x 6 foot terracotta relief he did for the Parliament House at Islamabad in 1985.







(From top): Jamila Masud painting; Jamal Shah; Rahat Saeed; (Below): Painting by Rahat Saeed.





Abdur Rahman Chughtai

ABDUR RAHMAN CHUGHTAI

Chughtai was already a famous name in the first quarter of this century. His paintings began to be published, from 1916 onwards, in the "Modern Review" of Calcutta, the most famous magazine of India in those days. When the editor of the magazine, R. N. Chatterji, started in 1918 to publish his "Chatterji's Picture Albums", a painting by Chughtai was included in each of the six volumes that were brought out. From January, 1920, when 'The Indian Academy of Art Journal" began publishing from Calcutta, quarterly, a painting of Chughtai was published in each of the first four issues, and later too.

Chughtai also participated in a number of art exhibitions all over India, from Simla to Madras, and won many prizes. The climax was his participation in the great British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924. For this, eleven of his paintings were selected, more than that of any other Indian artist.

Then in 1928 was published the "Muraqqa-e-Chughtai", which was an illustrated edition of the Diwan of Ghalib (Poetical Works of Ghalib). It was in those days the most beautiful book of art and literature to be published in India and became a best seller, with the result that Chughtai became a household word.

The early work of Chughtai available to view in "The Indian Academy of Art Journal" shows from the beginning his literary preoccupation and eagerness to paint ideas. Thus one painting is entitled "Omar Khayyam", in which a man is offering a handful of flowers to a lady, and another is entitled "Truth Locked Out", showing a heavily robed lady in chains standing outside a door.

A third picture shows a woman clasping two children and is called "In War Time", which is a most unlikely example of Chughtai taking notice of the happenings in the world around him, and is undoubtedly a caption given by the editor of the journal. A fourth painting, called "End of the Day" shows a heavily caparisoned camel stalking through the desert, led by a barely visible man bending low in front of the camel. The richly adorned camel is a subject that Chughtai continued to paint again and again in later times, to the exclusion of all other animals.

All these paintings have a delicate sketchy quality in which the drawing is meticulous but entirely fanciful and unrelated to real appearances. The third dimension is completely ignored and the images are weightless and thin. The shading sweeps arbitrarily over the picture, irrespective of the actual play of light. The drapery dominates the picture and the folds are lovingly rendered in quite fanciful linework. A dark colourful mist surrounds the main picture which is softly lighted in the centre.

The work of other Bengal artists printed in this journal includes B.C. Law, H. Majumdar and J. Roy (perhaps Jamini Roy). All these have a realistic style, in which the images have weight and volume. They do not belong to the school of Abanindranath Tagore. However, very similar to Chughtai is the work of another Lahore artist much published in this journal, namely Inayatullah, and also similar is the work of Mohammad Ijaz, published less often in the journal. Close affinities can also be noticed with the work of the Bengal School artists displayed in the Lahore Museum, such as B. C. Dey, K. N. Majumdar, S. N. Gupta and Abanindranath Tagore

Chughtai's image in the minds of the people was built up by the paintings reproduced in the "Muraqqa-e-Chughtai" and its cheaper edition "Naqsh-e-Chughtai". Although Chughtai lived and painted for another fifty years, almost, after the publication of the "Muraqqa", the image created by the book persists. To some extent this is justified because Chughtai kept repeating many subjects and many compositions all his life.

As one glances through the "Muraqqa", one can see that the illustrations approximate only roughly to the verses of Ghalib which serve as captions. It is commonly-



Eve of the Future

thought that most of the paintings had already been painted before Chughtai, with the help of some friends, selected a verse of Ghalib to be used as the caption of each picture .

What made the combination click was the similarity of certain features of the work of the artist and the poet. Both are sweetly sad and wistful. Ghalib's verses are of course laden with meaning, as most poetry is, and Chughtai too is one of those rare painters who like to convey an idea through pictures and to give it a literary content. The flights of fancy of the poet and his utter disregard of the realities of the surrounding world, in his ghazals, is matched by the imaginary archaic dresses and the fanciful flowers and trees and old architecture which forms the setting of most pictures. The musical cadences of the poetry are paralleled by the rhythmic cursive lines of the figure drawing and the drapery and the arabesque decorations in the background. The rapt emotional mood of the poems is matched by the dreamy drunken eyes of all the people in the pictures. Finally. the atmosphere of unreality, of a twilight time, of "a light that never was on sea or

CHUGHTAI

1894 (August)	*Born at Lahore. Passed Middle*
1911	*Class. Joined Drawing Masters' Course in Mayo School of Art.*
1914	*Passed the Course. Appointed Drawing Master in Mission School, Gujranwala.*
1916	*Appointed Teacher of Photo-lithography in Mayo School. Went to Calcutta to get more training in the subject. Met Bengali artists. One painting of Chughtai published in Calcutta magazine "Modern Review".*
1920	*Participated in Exhibition of British and Indian Arts and Crafts, Lahore.*
1924	*Left Mayo School.*
1928	*"Muraqqa-e-Chughtai" published.*
1932	*Visits Europe.*
1934	*Awarded title "Khan Bahadur"*
1935	*"Chughtai's Paintings" published.*
1936	*Second trip to Europe.*
1937	*Studied at School of Photo-engraving, London.*
1949	*Solo exhibition at opening of Pakistan Arts Council, Lahore.*
1951	*"Chughtai's Indian Paintings" published in Delhi.*
1967	*Solo exhibition at Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery, London.*
1968	*"Amal-e-Chughtai" published.*
1975 (Jan. 17)	*Died at Lahore.*

land". is well translated by the subdued colours and deep shadows that overcast most of the pictures.

Linework is very prominent in these paintings and they could well be called coloured drawings. Not only is the face and figure rendered in meticulous uniform fine line but the loose flowing dresses, mostly gowns with rich gathers and scarves with ample dimensions, provide occasion for the display of virtuoso linework in depicting the folds of the dress and its border decorations. The buildings at the back and sometimes quite arbitrarily placed decorative designs also call for very neat and complex drawing,



and so do the imaginary flowers and trees. The quality of the line is very fine, free-flowing, unfaltering and rhythmically cursive, except where geometrical patterns call for straight lines.

The colour is softened and subdued and deeply suffused by the special technique of colour application developed by the Bengal School, in which colour is successively applied and washed and reapplied. Different areas of the picture are painted flat, with a spotlessly uniform tone, and over that elaborate linework is done in the same colour in a slightly darker tone. The colours are softened and darkened and mixed but never used fresh and pure. Low value colours (with less light) like greens and blues and browns are the favourite ones. In fact, in most cases the whole picture has a brownish tonality which is created by dipping the whole picture in a wash of some diluted colour.

This wash technique of painting and this sketchy, light and fanciful style of drawing and these heavy surrounding brown shadows and luminous centre and this wholly arbitrary shading and lighting, were all derived from the Bengal School. This was understandable because a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore, namely S. N. Gupta, was Vice Principal of the Mayo School of Art during the period that Chughtai was a student there 1911-1914.

The other prominent artists of Lahore in those times, Inayatullah, Mian Mohammed Ejaz, Mohammad Hussain Quadri and Jalaluddin Chughtai were also old students of Mayo School and therefore of S. N. Gupta. The influence of the Bengal School in Lahore was further strengthened by the presence there of Roop Krishna, another pupil of Abanindranath Tagore.

The early work of Chughtai, such as that printed in the "Indian Academy of Art Journal", is indistinguishable from the work of the Bengal School in technique and style but the "Muraqqa" paintings are differentiated by the use of Muslim dress for men and women and by the use of Muslim architecture and Muslim arabesque decoration on dresses and buildings and in the background. Another important feature of the style that Chughtai developed in his "Muraqqa", as distinguished from the Bengal School, was the profusion of linework and drawing, in such features as the flowing dresses and their folds and decoration, the architectural background and its ornamentation, the imaginary flowers and shrubs and trees, and the sheer beautification through floral and arabesque designs in the background. In the Bengal School, there were very few features in the picture that had been linearly depicted and mostly it was made up of colourful washes and misty effects of dusk or dawn. Above all, Chughtai's paintings were different from that of the Bengal School because he painted in much bigger sizes and that gave him an opportunity to indulge in drawing of flowing lines in which he excelled.



Much more important is his Hindu publication "Chughtai's Indian Paintings" which was published from Delhi in 1951. It contained his paintings on Hindu and some Buddhist subjects. Since Chughtai did not paint these subjects after Independence, all this work dates back from the earliest period to 1947, including work done after 1928, the date of publication of the "Muraqqa". This book includes only 21 of the 200 paintings that Chughtai claims to have done on Hindu and Buddhist subjects.

In these paintings, Chughtai has presented his own interpretation of Hindu and Buddhist themes, such as Radha Krishna, the Mahabharata War, Arjun and the Pandava brothers, Ram, Lakhshman and their teacher, Ambapali, the courtesan converted by Buddha, and many more. It is interesting that Chughtai has marked all these Hindu and Buddhist paintings with a lotus flower painted in one corner of the picture.

What differentiates these from the "Muraqqa" paintings is the fact that the upper body of most of the figures, both men and women, is bare and thus there is more opportunity for figure drawing. In the "Muraqqa", the figures are so heavily draped that just the faces are visible, and even the heads are covered, both of men and women, except rarely. In the other group, there is even a full figure female nude painting entitled "After the Bath", although the figure is seen dimly through a thin cloth screen. Again, the picture of a lotus in a corner indicates that the artist considers it a Hindu subject.

Radha, with or without Krishna, is painted over and over again. The painting entitled "Gloomy Radha" actually shows a tall smiling girl with a long flowing scarf and loose gown. The rhythmic lines of the drapery create movement in the picture.

Another painting called "Charm of the Valley" shows Radha under a canopy supported by a pillar. Her breasts are bare and she is lost in the consciousness of her own beauty. Krishna is below the platform on which she is standing and only his bust is visible. Behind the high spot on which Radha stands, spreads a vast valley with tall conical cypresses. This scenic setting has been used by Chughtai in many paintings, earlier and later.

Another Hindu subject that Chughtai is very fond of painting is Arjun, the great warrior of the Mahabharata War. In the painting entitled "Krishna Instructing Arjun", a tall imposing figure represents Krishna, with long trailing lower garment or dhoti. On the right is visible the bust only of Arjun, who is standing much below the place on which Krishna is standing, as in the above painting.

Another painting entitled "Arjun" shows the sitting figure of the hero with a long flowing dhoti and bare torso. The figure is below the horizon which is in the middle of the picture. Above the horizon rise very stylized mountains but landscape is not a strong point of Chughtai. On the top right is a pavilion with one pillar visible and the cross



beam, often used by Chughtai in his compositions to give it some sort of a structure and strength.

Other paintings include "Shakti Devta", showing Shiva and his consort; "Yasoda", depicting the baby Ram and his mother, with bare breasts; "Devdasi", again bare breasted and many others.

The style of the Hindu paintings is more or less the same as of Chughtai's early work. The colours are mixed and softened, not fresh and pure, as was the case later. Very common in these paintings is the Bengal School mannerism of shading broad areas from dark to light in dusky colours, either from the top of the picture downwards or from the bottom up. The half-closed dreamy eyes set the tone of sweet languorousness. The wavy edges of the eyelids and also some of the figure postures are in the Bengali School manner which derived these from the Ajanta paintings. Some of the compositions are similar to those used in the "Muraqqa", like "Krishna Instructing Arjun" which is similar to "The Serenade" in the "Muraqqa" and another "Serenade" in "Chughtai's Paintings". In all these one figure is shown on the balcony and another much below it, while beyond spreads a vast scene.

Then we come to the major publication of Chughtai's late ripe years, namely the huge and voluminous. "Amal-e-Chughtai" which came out in 1968. It contained Chughtai's illustrations to the verses of Iqbal. Although in the Urdu commentary, written presumably by Chughtai, it has been pointed out that two of the paintings date back to the 20s, the rest are obviously of a later period. These two paintings are "The Story Teller" which forms the opening picture of the book, from the right, showing a peacock closeup and the Taj Mahal in the distance, while the other is "Fame" showing a woman sitting under a gateway, holding a tall lamp on her head. Both have that misty romantic colour of dusk, in which the tone is shaded from deep dark above to light below, or dark below and gradually lighter above. The colours are repeatedly washed and attenuated to create the soft suffused effect that was so loved by the artists of the Bengal School.

Even the second picture in the book (from the right) entitled "The Fragrance" shows the vast change of palette that came about in Chughtai's paintings after the "Muraqqa" work of the 20s. The picture depicts a lady reclining against a big cushion while she smells a flower held in her hand. No doubt the foreground and the background have still the same extensive brown washes, but the huge gown of the lady is all pink and the jacket crimson, while the background shows a garden scene in yellow and yellowish green, full of brightness.

Many pictures have this bright yellow and green landscape in the background, as "Under the Apple Tree" (showing a Kashmiri woman and child), "The Green Field" (showing a peasant man and a small girl leaning against a tree), "Jahangir and Nur Jahan", "The Young Farmer" (holding a corn cob in his hand), and many more.

Some pictures even have such contrasting colours as scarlet and green in profusion, as "The Virtuous" (supposed to be a portrait of Princess Zebunissa), "The Young Farmer" and "Still Life"(showing a bunch of imaginary leaves and flowers in a blue flower vase).

Other strikingly bright colour schemes are found in such paintings as "Modesty" in which the standing figure of a maiden is shown robed in yellow with a long pink scarf, foreground green and background orange.Bright blue is used in the portrait of "Ghani Kashmiri" and in the picture of a plump pretty Kashmiri girl entitled "Sparkling Eyes". The turquoise blue of the former and the cobalt blue of the latter are both unusual colours in Chughtai .

Apart from the colours, the spirit of the pictures is markedly different. The drunken dreamy looks and the downcast head suggested a person lost in poetic ecstasy or in romantic melancholy and far from the world of action. That was appropriate for the illustrations of the poetical works of Ghalib. Illustrations of the poetry of Iqbal had to be quite different. Iqbal was the messenger of hope and the inspirer of action. Illustrations of his verses had to show men who were wide awake and alert and self-confident and proud. Therefore we find in "Amal" figures with upraised heads and straight, determined looks, almost everywhere in the book. The best examples are "Will and Power" which

forms the title page from the right, showing a very determined looking young armed warrior; also "Job and Leadership". showing a stalwart warrior with his long sword, standing by his daughter whom he seems to be inspiring to the same life of Godly "Jihad" or righteous struggle that he is himself leading under the inspiration of the Quran that the girl is holding.



The Story Teller

Similar are the pictures of the ladies who made a name for themselves in the world of action: Sharfun-Nisa, daughter of Abdus Samad, the Governor of the Punjab, who herself ruled the Punjab after him. Then there is the picture "Jahangir and Nur Jahan" in which the famous queen who ruled the realm in the time of her husband, is shown much more prominent than her husband. The picture of Zubeida Khatun, wife of the great Haroun-al-Rashid, is also a grand figure, befitting tribute to a woman justly celebrated in history for her memorable deeds of public welfare.

Other nameless figures that have the same nobility and grandeur in keeping with Iqbal's ideal of manhood and womanhood are "Charm of the East", showing a tall very impressive lady standing erect under an arch, and likewise "Eve of the Future", which is a picture of a lady very proudly and confidently standing between two flowering plants, while the third example can be given of yet another dynamic personality, a lady standing in a forest holding a hawk on her hand, ready for action.

To create the effect of massiveness and monumentality and grandeur, Chughtai often uses in "Amal-e-Chughtai" the stylistic device of inflating and enlarging the figures, ignoring considerations of realism. Such is the picture of the bearded old man entitled "Wisdom" and of the robust young falconer entitled "Self Revelation" and the picture of the majestic Kashmiri woman with her child entitled "Under the Apple Tree". The same



Zubeida Khatun

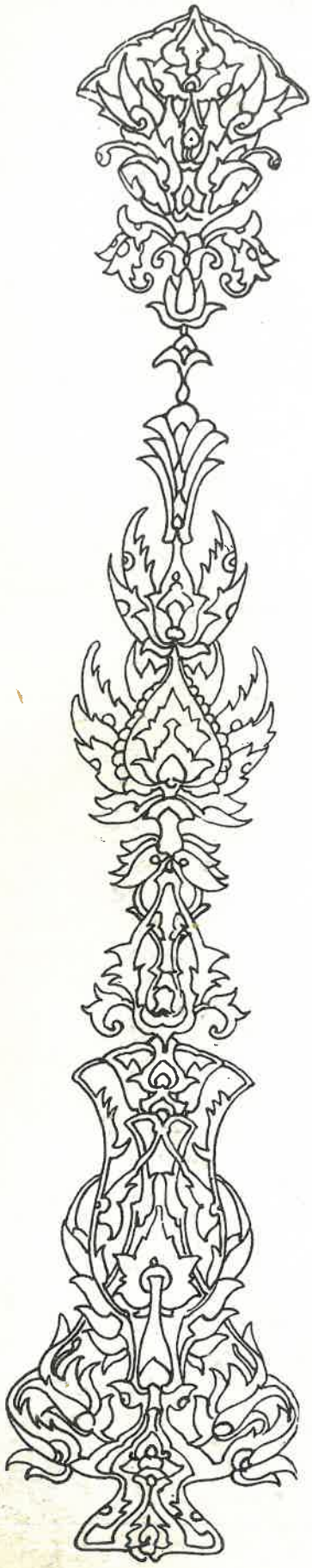
exaggeration is found to some extent in other paintings, notably "Aurangzeb", "Khalifa Haroun Rashid", "Ghani Kashmiri". "The Sultan and the Saint", "Leadership" and many others.

The effect of grandeur and sublimity and "jalal" so admired by Iqbal is also created by Chughtai through the use of towering buildings, as in "Mourning for Baghdad" in which a lofty domed building rises behind the figure of Sa'adi who is standing and mourning the fall of Baghdad. In "Muezzin's Call" there are many domes and minarets behind the bust of the man giving the call to prayer. The picture "With All Grace" shows a dark and awesome fortress which looks all the bigger because of the small figure of the king standing in front of the gate. The tall pillars in "Glory of the Almighty" produce the same effect.

The impression of power and grandeur is also created by Chughtai by bringing the image close to the viewer on the picture plane, as in "Retrospect", showing a very grim looking woman holding an upraised sword, and in "Son of the Soil", showing a confident looking farmer with upraised head, and also "Slave Girl with Slippers" on the cover of the book, from the left side. In spite of bringing the image close and magnifying it, the picture remains a miniature because only the outline of the face and the features are rendered in



Tipu Sultan



line while the undulations of the face and the bony and muscular structure is not at all touched. Linear decoration is provided by giving prominence to the dress, always ample and expansive, on which the folds are laboriously drawn and also decorations made on the borders and sometimes even on the main area. The careful, continuous, uniform, unfaltering and wiry line is used as in Mughal miniatures but not so realistically. The curves are smoothed out and the lines drawn rhythmically.

Chughtai's style is different from that of the Mughal miniatures because the Mughals never showed the picture so close to the viewer as Chughtai sometimes does.

Nor did they paint the bust or half or three quarters figure when they made portraits. This way of cutting short the figure at the bottom border was the influence of photography on painting.

The most remarkable feature of Chughtai's painting is the composition. He places the figure or figures on the paper in such a way, arranges their postures and gestures so effectively, gives them a setting of trees or buildings or designs so impressively that the elements of the whole picture fall into a well knit, well balanced totality and artistic unity.

In "Amal-e-Chughtai", the figure compositions take a variety of forms. Some are single standing figures like "Tipu", "Prince Salim", "Zubeida Khatun" and Sa'adi in "Mourning for Baghdad". Some are double standing figures like "Babur and Humayun", "Jahangir and Nur Jahan", "The Bond of Love" and others.

There are also single pictures showing bust or half figure only, as in "Tariq", "Young Farmer", "Son of the Soil", "Ghani Kashmiri" and many others.

The same bust or half figure is used sometimes to depict two persons together as in 'Sultan and Saint", "National Emblem" and others. Of course, the two figures are variously arranged. Sometimes they are one before the other, sometimes one beside the other, sometimes one beside but below the other, and so on.

Then there are sitting figures, some sitting sideways, as "The Virtuous", some grandly frontal but showing the face sideways (as in "Sharfun-Nisa"), some sitting with knees outspread and one slightly raised, as in the commanding figure of "Haroun Rashid", some almost sprawling, as "Aurangzeb".

Noteworthy is the use of architecture to provide a framework for the composition, as in the fine standing figure entitled "Daughter of the Harem", framed in a gateway, between two pillars and below a beam, or as in "Determination", showing the figure of a warrior with a long lance, with a pillar on one side and a high arch behind. Buildings or architectural features are used with the figures to provide structure to the composition and to firm it up.

They also provide Chughtai an occasion to indulge in his favourite pastime of drawing floral or arabesque decorations on the pillars or walls or parapets or other architectural members of the buildings. This was but natural for him because he received his earliest art education copying the designs on the walls of Wazir Khan's Mosque where his uncle Baba Miran Bakhsh worked as a "naqqash", a worker in traditional design .

Sometimes, Chughtai draws and paints these designs behind and beside the figure in panels or squares or rectangles, without the excuse of a building on which to make them. This is in the tradition of Persian miniature paintings in which areas of beautiful designs are made part of the picture quite arbitrarily and we see what look like carpets floating frontally over the scene. Some of the finest and most prominent can be seen in "Sharfun-Nisa" where a vertical panel or screen seems to stand behind her, and also in "Zubeida Khatun" behind whom a whole wall is covered with arabesque, and again in "Job and Leadership" showing the figures of a man and a woman on one side of whom is a thin vertical panel of design and the empty space on top right is filled with a square design.

Sometimes an architectural look is given to the ornamentation when it does not really add up to a building, on close examination. For example, in "The Bond of Love", behind the two figures is a very broad almost flat arch (of which Chughtai seems to be very fond) and the silhouette of pillars on either side but within this outline there is no structure but only geometrical and floral decoration.

It is interesting to compare the composition of some of the paintings in the "Muraqqa" (1928) with those in "Chughtai's Paintings" (1940) and yet others in "Amal-e-Chughtai" (1968). For example, there is a picture in the "Muraqqa" entitled "Serenade", showing a lady sitting close to the thin pillar of a pavilion that rises above her. The platform on which she is sitting is a balcony below which stands a man whose bust only is visible. He is playing a guitar and the lady is listening enraptured.

The painting entitled "Serenade" in "Chughtai's Paintings" is almost the same. Chughtai was fond of painting the same composition many times, with slight changes or even exactly the same. For example, more than one copies are known to exist of the painting "A Night of Shiraz" one of which is hanging in the Lahore Museum.

The painting in "Amal" which has a somewhat similar composition is "Jahangir and Nur Jahan", in which also a lady is standing on a balcony while a pavilion rises (unseen) above her supported by the pillar she is holding. Below the balcony, only half visible, stands Jahangir, while behind on the top right spreads a vast garden scene. In the "Muraqqa", the scene beyond is only a tree with dangling flowers.

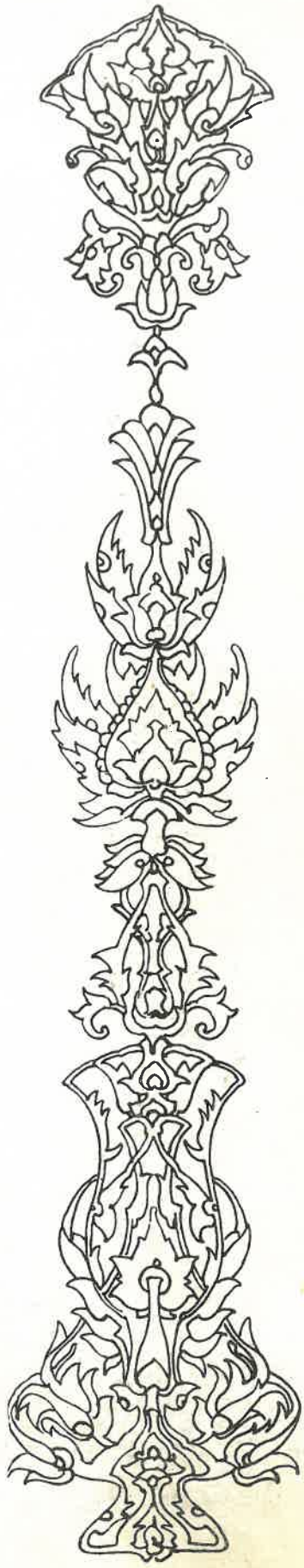
The colours of the "Muraqqa" picture are mostly brownish or yellow ochre and very soft and subdued. The atmosphere is one of the sadness of love and of wistful melancholy. The colours of the "Amal" painting are bright yellow and orange and green. The atmosphere is one of gaiety and exultant love,while the lady flying the hawk on her hand sets the mood of action.

Another two paintings that invite comparison are the coloured drawing in the "Muraqqa" called "Princess of the Sahara" and the painting in the "Amal" called "The Desert in Love". In the first, a damsel with flowing robe sits in front of a camel with ornate canopied litter. In the second, the maiden and the camel are almost the same but the situation is made much more dramatic by confronting the maiden, Laila, with her distraught and emaciated lover, Majnoon. All the gazelles of the desert are looking at her lovingly and even the camel is nuzzling close to her. The expression on the face of the lady also is meaningful and not blank as in the "Muraqqa" while Majnoon is well depicted by his figure and his looks as the very embodiment of love.

There are no pictures in "Amal" full of dark despair and deep melancholy, as there are in the "Muraqqa", such as "The Extinguished Flame" showing a woman lying prostrate below a tall lamp that sheds no light, or "The Web of Life" showing in dusky colours a stooping old man standing beside a group of children, symbolizing the sad end of life. Similarly, "The Flowers of Yesterday" depicts in dark colours a man pondering on the bleak scene from which all the loved ones have departed. The symbolic painting "Life" shows a feebly lighted lamp placed in a lotus floating aimlessly on a dark stream at night with nothing visible except a blasted tree. The mournful "Resting Place" shows a sorrowful woman at a grave in the dead of night.

On the other hand, there are paintings in the "Amal" which are brimming with the joy of life and exuding proud self-confidence. The best example is the right-side cover of the book which carries the picture entitled "Will and Power" showing a proud and robust young man holding a sword. Another good example is the first picture in the book, from the left, (no title) showing a beautiful maiden sitting in the midst of a garden and enjoying herself with a cup of wine. Her head is held high and the look on her face is that of exultation and a high consciousness of herself.

Equally proud and confident and joyous looking are the many other pictures of beautiful women and strong men, such as "The Mughal Princesses", depicting two tall graceful women standing by a pool; "Daughter of the Harem", showing a young woman standing erect in front of a gateway; "Flask of Vanity" showing a woman with a hawk on her hand, as if ready for the hunt, and many other paintings such as "Eve of the Future",





National Emblem

"National Emblem" and others.

Then there are inspiring pictures of men such as "Haroun Rashid" with a sword in his hand, as if about to rise; "Tipu Sultan" standing aggressively in front of a cannon; "Prince Salim" standing grandly before the statue of an elephant; "Determination", showing a stalwart soldier with a lance and many others.

War and warriors are much glorified by Chughtai and Iqbal because they symbolize a life of action and that was the central idea of the teachings of Iqbal. Even women are shown imbued with warlike spirit, as the mother in the painting "The National Emblem' who holds a sword over the head of her son, in obvious reference to Iqbal's verse: "Khanjar hilal ka hai qaumi nishan hamara" (The scimitar-shaped crescent moon is our national emblem). Then there is "Retrospect" in which a woman is holding up a sword before her face, as if making a pledge to join some noble enterprise.

Noteworthy also are pictures of great warriors such as Tipu Sultan, and General Tariq and Emperor Babur and Emperor Aurangzeb. Unfortunately, the characterization in these pictures is very poor, except perhaps Tipu. Even his warlike character is weakened by the dreamy looks and upraised pupils that Chughtai insists on making in almost all his pictures. Tariq, the great general is rightly shown very young but there is not a trace of strength on his smooth boyish face. The worst example of characterization is the picture entitled "Babur and Humayun". The man with the small beard is Babur but he is standing with folded hands before his son who is holding out his hand as if admonishing. There is nothing of the great man of action on the face or figure of Babur, while Humayun is no better than a doll. Babur is made to look all the more ridiculous by showing his feet spread out like those of a clown, simply because Chughtai cannot draw the feet frontally, which requires foreshortening of the image. Therefore, everywhere, even if the figure is standing frontally, the two feet are both turned sideways. This can be seen again in the picture "Determination" showing a soldier with a long lance.

Equally disappointing is the picture of Aurangzeb whom Iqbal lauded to the skies as a great mujahid or crusader. Surprisingly, the great warrior who commanded armies in the battlefield even at the age of eighty has been shown sprawled on a couch in a most ungainly pose.

Whatever his weaknesses, Chughtai triumphs as an artist because of his superb drawing and his immaculate composition. His drawing is very much in evidence in his painting because all the human figures and the trees, flowers, buildings, are very clearly and sharply outlined but also because he creates occasions for the display of his linework in the loose flowing dresses whose folds are lovingly depicted by him in a dense network of lines. This tendency was further reinforced in Chughtai during the 20s and 30s by the influence of the Art Nouveau of Aubrey Beardsley and others, who at the end of the 19th century made fashionable a linear art of twisting, weaving, convoluting patterns and also dense linear decoration. But Chughtai got over this influence and instead made profuse use of traditional Islamic arabesque and floral and geometrical decoration that he had learnt to copy as a child in Wazir Khan's Mosque of Lahore, under the guidance of his naqqash (decorator) uncle Baba Miran Bakhsh. This linear decoration he lavishes on the borders and main areas of the dresses of his female figures and on the buildings and on the background designs that he arbitrarily adds to the composition for decoration. The same extraordinary skill in drawing is seen in the unreal trees and flowers and leaves with which he adorns his paintings. It can be seen to perfection in his pencil drawings in the "Muraqqa" and also in his coloured drawings in the "Muraqqa" and in "Amal". The line moves smoothly, unerringly, unfalteringly, unvarying in thickness or darkness, like a thin wire. It is anyone's guess whether he made these lines with a fine brush or with a metal pen. The latter is far more likely as there is no thickening or thinning of the line in its progress.

The second and greatest merit of Chughtai's work is the composition. This has endless variety and ingenuity so that in every picture he comes up with a new solution. Sometimes it is just the way a single figure is posed, how the torso is placed, how the head is placed on the neck, how the hands and legs are arranged. This can be exceedingly impressive as can be seen in the sitting figure of the grand lady "Sharfun-Nisa" and in the standing figure of the supremely graceful lady "Charm of the East".



When there are two figures, he places them together in a variety of ways, sometimes one slightly behind the other, or one much below the other or one in front of the other and so on, but always well balanced.

There are no pictures of crowds in the "Muraqqa" but in "Amal" there are many and here Chughtai uses all his skill in composition to arrange the faces and figures in a satisfying composite whole. A good example is the "Eid Message" in which a group of old and young women are shown praying on sighting the Eid moon. Similarly, in "The Voice of Virtue", a crowd of votaries is gathered around a saintly old woman. Other examples worth studying are "Mansoor Hallaj" and the coloured drawing "More Than Shadow" and the etching "Dead Shrines".

After the main figure or figures have been well set and arranged, he strengthens the composition by adding architectural background or landscape or panels of designs or other devices.

In any case, the composition is so strong and satisfying that it hides any other weaknesses that might strike the eye on close examination such as poor characterization weak anatomy, feeble rendering of trees and animals and lack of expression on the faces.

Chughtai has laid down his own style and within its parameters he undoubtedly excels and will always be admired, however the fashions in art may change from age to age.

Photographs of Chughtai's paintings are printed here by courtesy of Chughtai Museum Trust, Lahore.

An etching



USTAD ALLAHBUX

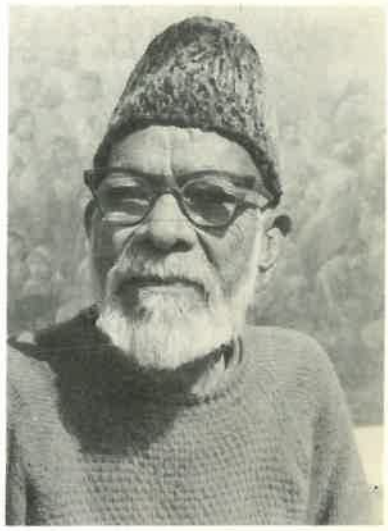
Ustad means master. Allahbux (1895-1978) was a most prolific and a very versatile artist who literally produced thousands of paintings during the half century in which he was active.

He was initiated into the craft of painting in his home town of Wazirabad when at the age of five, he became an apprentice of the local signboard painter, Master Mohammed Abdullah. After many years of grounding in the art of lettering, he got a job in the railway workshop to paint words and designs on railway carriages

A very significant change in his life as an artist came when he went to Calcutta and joined the theatrical company of the famous dramatist Agha Hashr as curtain painter. That experience exercised a strong influence on him as can be seen in the numerous theatrical paintings that he produced.

From Calcutta he came back to Lahore and tried to eke out a living as a painter but without success. So, in 1914 he left for Bombay and there was able to get a chance to work with a UP artist Mohammad Rafi who was running an art studio with some apprentices in the employ of a Hindu businessman, Lala Ram Lal. They were engaged in painting Hindu religious and mythological pictures, mostly pictures of Lord Krishna. That experience also was a long-lasting influence on his work and he came to be known as Allahbux Krishen because of the numerous paintings of Lord Krishna that he made.

He lived for five years in Bombay, returned to Lahore in 1919 and went back again in 1922. In 1937 he went to Patiala where the Maharaja had invited him. After the death of the old Maharaja, he retuned to Lahore permanently in 1938 and set up his studio there.



Ustad Allahbux

Buffaloes by the riverside



USTAD ALLAHBUX

1895	Born at Wazirabad.
1900	Started learning letttering and drawing from Master Abdullah.
1909	Started painting signboards independently.
1914	Worked for playwright Agha Hashr, painting stage sets.
1915-19	Lived in Bombay.
1919-22	Lived in Lahore. Worked for "Paisa Akhbar".
1922-37	Again lived in Bombay.
1923	Won first prize in annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society.
1937-38	In service of Maharaja of Patiala.
1939-78	In Lahore.
1960	Awarded "Tamgha-e- Imtiaz".
1978 (Oct. 18)	Died at Lahore.

The Hindus were his major clients and painting of Hindu subjects, especially Krishna, was his favourite activity. All that changed when Pakistan came into being in 1947 and there was no demand for paintings of Hindu subjects. Allahbux had, of course, been painting other subjects too and now he turned all his attention to painting the Punjab rural scene. Therefore, one important aspect of his multi-dimensional work is a celebration of Punjab village life.

It is difficult to survey comprehensively the work of Ustad Allahbux because there is such infinite variety in it and generalizations are difficult to make. Even classification of the work into categories is not easy because there are so many. However, for the sake of discussion, we can roughly divide his work into eight categories:

1. Theatrically posed figures in flat colours and coloured lines.
2. Theatrically posed figures or tableaux in three dimensions.
3. Punjabi village life scenes and processions.
4. Close-ups of farming and ploughing scenes.
5. Single or double figures in architectural setting.
6. Trees and forests.
7. Cloudy and misty scenes.
8. Large crowded compositions of fanciful figures.

There must be many paintings that are not covered in the above categories but perhaps these eight include some of the most significant work of the late Ustad.

1. Tableaux in coloured line and flat washes.

This is one style of the late master in which he painted subjects that had a narrative basis. For example, a man could be shown standing in a heroic pose with sword and shield and wearing an ornate gaudy dress. Or, a woman could be shown in a dancing pose with other women at the back playing on musical instruments. The dresses in these paintings are highly decorative and jewellery is given much prominence. The poses are conventional and theatrical and the faces are almost all similar and very doll-like. It is illustrative and anecdotal picture making and that is all.

2. Tableaux in three dimensions.

"I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed."
Shelley



The same kind of heavily theatrical scenes are painted by Allahbux in three dimensions. Again, there is much emphasis on costumes and the rendering of silk and velvet material and jewellery, but in this group of paintings, the work is minutely and smoothly finished, as in old masters. For example, in one picture a man stands at the back holding out jewellery in each of his outstretched hands while in the foreground a woman is half kneeling and reaching out towards one of the jewels. Another woman seems to be resisting the temptation and is sitting beside a low ornate table on which lies the holy book in a bookrest. The poses of the figures are very artificial and the treatment of the drapery is very conventional and the faces are stereotyped and lifeless. The picture seems to be part of a theatre curtain more than a truly expressive and artistic painting.

3. Punjabi Village Life Scenes and Processions.

Allahbux has painted many canvases showing a long line of people either going to a wedding or to a festival or some such occasion that calls for social celebration. In these he depicts realistically the common people, their facial types, their dresses and their customs-such as musicians playing on long iron tongs and people taking all kinds of banners in the processions as they go to the sites of the festivals or women carrying baskets of clothes and gifts on their heads as they wend their way to a wedding. He shows young and old, men and women, babies and children in their typical dresses. It is all very realistic but somewhat stiff and conventional. Every part is depicted in equal detail and there is no distribution of emphasis. The characterization is poor.

4. Close-ups of Farming and Ploughing Scenes.

In these close-up studies, the mass and volume of the animals and the men is much more powerfully depicted. The bullocks especially are painted with much empathy and



Bullocks threshing corn

show very close observation and masterly rendering. One such painting is hanging in the Modern Gallery of the Lahore Museum and another in the Gallery of the Karachi Arts Council. The light in these pictures is very soft and diffused and so there are no strong shadows on the figures of the animals and the men and their details are equally clearly spread out from one end to the other.

5. Single or double figures in architectural setting.

Allahbux often paints a beautiful female figure or two in an architectural setting, that is, against the background of an arch or a jali (lattice work in stone) or a parapet. In the foreground and centre, there may be a carpet with its own elaborate design. In the foreground, there is this figure, elegantly composed, often in some dance pose. One picture for example, shows a woman sitting with her hands raised in prayer while in front of her lies the Holy Quran on a bookrest called rehel. Behind her is a stone lattice window, and below that the dado at the base of the wall with a row of octagons. She is sitting on a richly designed carpet. This picture reminds one strongly of Chughtai but the difference is that the figure has very realistic proportions and the drapery has very realistic wrinkles and the light effect is very prominently shown on the figure.

6. Trees and Forests.

A large category of the late master's paintings shows trees or rather tree trunks, quite often lopped off at the top and cut short at the upper edge of the painting. Mostly. they are bare trunks arranged in a variety of very natural compositions, leaning sideways or across each other and so on. Each picture is painted in a different colour scheme and with new light effects so that no two are alike. They are almost like abstract paintings in which the tree trunks have been used as the basic imagery and the whole composition has been built up with that. It seems obvious that these remarkable paintings have not been done to please his clients but for his own pleasure.

There is one other important sub-group of these tree paintings in which instead of the tree trunks the artist has shown thick clusters of vegetation deep down in the forest. Sometimes in the middle there is the figure of a man, perhaps a hermit or a poet, with some light playing on him. There is an air of mystery in these pictures and one is left guessing the meaning. The artist adopts a new and interesting style of brushwork to render this thick foliage. He makes short sharp scribbling movements with the brush and creates little curls and zigzags that depict leaves, in a matted form. Trunks are hardly visible in these woodland scenes but sometimes twisted branches are shown. The varying shades of green and brown and many related colours are also depicted with great mastery. These and the tree trunk paintings discussed above are wholly original in style and owe nothing to tradition. They form a delightful and a very remarkable contribution of Allahbux to Pakistani art.

7. Cloudy and Misty Scenes

Just as Allahbux could create a great painting with no features in it except waves of water, so he could use a dust storm as a subject. A masterly painting entitled "Dust Storm" is hanging in the Modern Gallery of the Lahore Museum. There is nothing but a play of colour in this very large painting. On the low horizon, there is bright yellow and orange and above that the dark purple threatening dust storm and some cloud formations. Two small leafless trees are bending under the force of the wind at the bottom left.

He has painted a number of pictures in which the whole scene is covered with billowing clouds or luminous smoke in yellow and orange and blue and purple colours. In these clouds of smoke or vapours are dimly shown faces and figures sometimes a few and sometimes a crowd, like superhuman creatures of another world. These mystical visions are rendered in dreamily dim contours but in rich and vivid colours, as in a stormy sky or as in a huge conflagration. They are masterpieces of colour control and brushwork.

8. Large Crowded Compositions of Fanciful Figures

There are other paintings in which the atmosphere is not rendered vague by clouds or mist or smoke but crowds and masses of faces and figures are depicted quite clearly in all kinds of fanciful and strange forms. They are masterpieces of inventiveness and skill in composition. Such is the huge painting entitled "Tilism-e-HoshRuba" hanging in the

A poet deep in the woods.



Modern Gallery of the Lahore Museum. It shows an old magician standing below and creating all kinds of supernatural creatures, such as jinns and fairies and also princes and princesses, warriors and wrestlers and so on. The sheer ingenuity and fertility of the artist's imagination is as remarkable as the skill with which he has been able to arrange them on the canvas. Then the distribution of light and shade and the arrangement of the colour scheme further adds to the beauty of the painting and makes it an outstanding work of art.

There must be many creations of Allahbux that are not covered in these eight categories that have been discussed above but enough has been said to show that there is immense variety in his work and also many levels. Some of those showing Punjabi rural life are very conventional illustrations in which there is no characterization and no force of line in the drawing or any striking effects of light or colour. But on the other hand there are the wonderful woodland scenes in which the tree-trunks make strange patterns and the dense foliage creates a mysterious atmosphere. Most remarkable are the cloudy misty scenes, shot with colour, in which visionary faces and figures appear, half visible. All these show masterly control of the medium and are really fantasies in colour. They could be called a fanciful and Oriental version of Turner, so free and colourful and largely conceived they are. With command of so many styles and with output so enormous, one cannot but recognize Ustad Allahbux as one of the greats of Pakistani art.

"Tilism-e-Hosh-Ruba" (The spell that steals the senses.)





Fyzee Rahamin

FYZEE RAHAMIN

Fyzee Rahamin is the rare example of an artist who mastered the Western style of painting at the beginning of this century but then abandoned it voluntarily to come back to his own Eastern land and draw inspiration from the work and traditions and philosophy of Oriental masters.

He received his early training in art at the J. J. School of Art in Bombay where the famous British painter, Solomon J. Solomon was principal. After graduating from there he studied for four years at the Royal College of Art in London and then was lucky enough to be accepted as a pupil by the most famous portrait painter of the time, Sir John Singer Sargent.

He proved such an adept pupil that his work was sometimes mistaken for that of Sargent.

There is his portrait of Miss Gainsborough, whose lighted face emerges from the huge dark encircling bonnet and hair, all so romantically fuzzy and hazy. There is Kathleen, the standing figure of a girl, emerging through the mist, as it were, with light playing softly on the face only.

In these and many more, the artist shows his complete command of the solid structure of the head and the face and his ability to play a soft light on one side of the face while enclosing the surrounding area in shadows that set off the face. It is a dramatic and romantic way of presenting the subject in the manner that was popular in London at the time. The drawing is not sharp, the colours are fresh but not bold and there is full use of contrast of light and dark areas and an overall dreamy hazy effect.

The drawing of a woman's uplifted head done with red conte crayon shows his remarkable drawing and his ability to show the third dimension through apt shading.

Fyzee Rahamin told this writer that Sargent himself advised him to go back to his country and paint in the age-old tradition of the East where his roots lay because by copying the style of the Western masters he would never be able to do better than the originals he was copying and would not be able to draw upon his inner resources of sense of beauty and art that he had inherited.

Rahamin had the boldness to take the risk of abandoning a style that he was practising so successfully and developing a new style based on the ideals of Oriental art.

It seems that he passed through an intermediate phase of which an excellent example is his superb painting of Mahmooda Begum, an Indian lady whose face is shown in profile. The linear basis of the picture is more prominent. The composition is simple because it is divided into a few large areas, each coloured almost flat. The face, however, is shown in low relief but enough to indicate the bony structure and the rise and fall of the surface. The colouring is very subtly varied and the play of light is soft and subdued. The contours of the pictures and the features of the face are all lucid and clear, with no attempt to create romantic fuzziness. The perfect balance of the composition and the deep look of peace on the face impart a spiritual quality to the picture. It has been aptly called the Mona Lisa of Pakistan.

Another step, still closer to Oriental art, was taken by Rahamin when he painted the portrait of the Rani of Rajpipla, standing, wearing a red sari. The change of style becomes clear when one compares it with another full figure portrait of the same size, entitled "Kathleen". The first is linear in treatment and the second tonal; the colours of the one are lucid and even, while those of the other are glimmering through mysterious shadows; the folds of the sari are schematic while the dress of the English girl are realistically depicted; there is an ornamental quality in the former and a naturalistic approach in the latter; there is an atmosphere enveloping the European figure but none in the case of the Indian princess; there is an ethereal quality about the former and a corporeal character in the latter; the one is light and airy and the second is slightly ponderous .

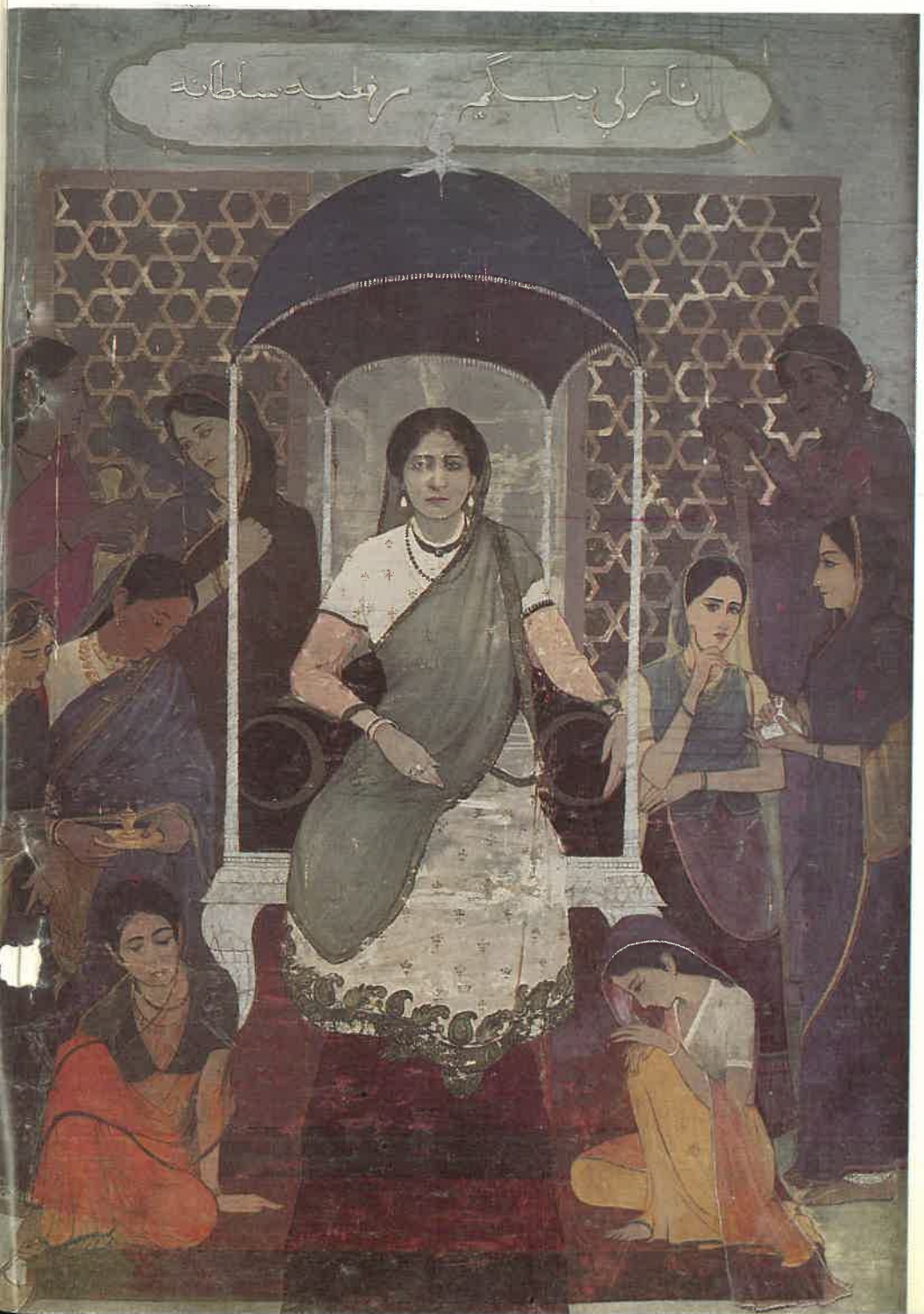
Rani of Rajpipla



The indigenous character becomes more and more dominant as he painted the people and places of his land. There are portraits of the dying aristocracy, pictures of the great musicians, mosques and shrines.

Still more ethereal are the paintings of the great ragas or musical modes of our classical music, in which his imagination is not tied down by objective reality but freely creates images with line and colour that capture the mood and feeling of that particular raga.

The Begum of Janjira



FYZEE RAHAMIN

1880 (Dec. 19)	*Born at Poona. Educated at J. J. School of Art, Bombay, and Royal Academy of Art, London.*
1904-08	*Studied under John Singer Sargent in London.*
1909	*Returned to India*
1912	*Embraced Islam. Married Atiya Begum. Organized art gallery in Baroda State.*
1914	*Solo exhibitions in Paris and London.*
1926-27	*Painted murals inside Ist Dome of Secretariat, New Delhi.*
1928-29	*Painted murals inside dome of Committee Room.*
1947	*Migrated to Pakistan. Settled in Karachi.*
1952	*Donated all his art collection (which he had installed in a new museum building) to the Karachi Municipal Corporation.*
1964 (Oct. 9)	*Died in Karachi.*



Kathleen

In a class by themselves are the large landscapes of the snow-capped Himalayas in which broad sweeps of line and colour recreate the grandeur and the ineffable peace of the mountains. A yogi sitting in the foreground helps to emphasize the spiritual quality of the picture.

The medium of these paintings is also indigenous, namely, milk of linseed and the pigments are all mineral except indigo blue which is a vegetable dye.

The drawing is incredibly simple and naive, the colouring soft and subdued, even when the subject offers a temptation to dramatize, as in the pictures of the giant glaciers or of the grand old warriors. This could be easily attributed to lack of skill but when it is realized that they are the deliberate work of a man who has excelled in verisimilitude characteristic of Western art, then it will be conceded that the artist had some purpose in drawing and painting the way he did.

However, a radical departure from Western styles was made by Rahamin when he was commissioned by the British rulers of India to paint the ceiling of the First Dome of the Imperial Secretariat at New Delhi in 1926 and the dome of the Committee Room in 1928. Now he moved still farther away from the realism and the romanticism of the West because he decided now to paint ideas. The murals are in New Delhi but the "cartoons", as they are called, the basic drawings made for the murals, were in the Fyzee Rahamin Museum in Karachi, now unfortunately lost. The themes of these murals are Love and War, Spring and Winter and so on. These are linear creations in which the abstract subject is given a form that is as immaterial as a picture can be — sparse and light and weightless. The rhythmic lines make it float like a vision.

The entire work of Rahamin reveals the quest of the artist for a clearer and still clearer vision of the ideal Beauty which manifests itself in physical forms but which is higher and nobler and not to be equated with them. He conceives of physical form as having the same relation to true beauty in painting as the physical vibrations of the air have to the essence of music. Both speak to the spirit and are themselves vehicles of the spirit. Rahamin seems to have searched for the best vehicles to transmit the visitations of the spirit of Beauty and the story of his quest, in a nutshell, is the shift of emphasis from the corporeal to the ethereal. The corporeal quality of the painting represents the view of the inert and the inarticulate. The ethereal quality, which is ambient in the forms of true art, represents the vision of the universal, the living and the meaningful. This is why Rahamin at first explored the style prevalent in England at the turn of the century and tried to make it as transparent as possible for the expression and glow of the ideal Beauty. Finding, however, that the physical aspect sits too heavy on the meaning, he changed over to the age-old styles of the East. At the same time he turned to the use of familiar scenes and sights of his own country whose deepest significance he understood and felt. The result is that in these paintings the supersensuous rhythm and beauty glows out more clearly through the "vestures of decay". Finally, he moved to the use of the most ideal subjects, which, even with corporeal figures and faces, share the quality of creatures of the mind. One of the finest examples is "The Scholar" another is "The Scribe" and, of course, his murals, "Love and War," Spring and Summer, "Justice" and so forth.

This style of painting fits in perfectly with the object the artist had in view namely, to present visible and concrete forms so as to express spiritual truth and beauty, to catch glimpses of the ideal in the real. It is a delicate, sensitive and austere way of drawing and painting. There is no room here for loud flourishes of the picturesque or the dramatic. There is an air of utter simplicity and primitiveness, a refusal to exploit craft.

Those who think that his eye is not trained enough to see more minutely or his hand to render it more cunningly, would be easily disabused of their notions if they saw his early work in the Western style. They would then realize that he stills the eye of sense in order to awaken a deeper insight, which is distracted by unimportant details. Others who complain that his work lacks force probably miss the bravura which is a means of projection of personal moods and of asserting one's personality. All this would be out of place because Rahamin is only trying to capture and transmit a value whose source is above and beyond himself, and which should remain, as far as possible, untrammelled by the finite, the personal and the local.



Mahmooda Begum

One kind of drawing and painting makes the spectator at once refer the picture to the everyday concrete world but there can be another which carries no hint of temporal sensations, desires and passions but rather lifts us up to a plane where there is ideal equilibrium. No one stroke or shade can explain this but it speaks for itself to the discerning eye. For example the huge lifesize portrait of Maulana Shaukat Ali shows a big physical mass through which no glimmer of meaning shines out. On the other hand the picture entitled "The Scholar" shows a figure in simple swinging lines. It is imbued with a vital rhythm and seems to vibrate with ideal grace in the realm of the spirit.

Perhaps the most successful are Rahamin's Himalayan landscapes, whose colours have sadly deteriorated because of neglect and age but whose composition and contours are still clear. The rocks, the trees, the clouds hardly catch one's eye. Rather it is the expression that the face of nature wears, the impassioned look, the ominous silence, the rapt atmosphere that enthral and bewitch us. Here in quintessence is the distinctive quality of Rahamin's work — soulfulness.

Atiya Begum Fyzee



SYED HASAN ASKARI

Syed Hasan Askari had worked for about twenty years in Lucknow (India) and another twenty years in Karachi (Pakistan) when he died in 1969.

He was one of a group of Academic Realists whose pioneer was Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) of Travancore (India) who first began Western style oil painting in India.

When Askari began his artistic career in the late 20s, the well-established Academic Realists were Atul Bose and Hemen Majumdar. Among his contemporaries, Askari admired Gangoli and Lal Kaka, both Bengali artists

During the forty years of his artistic career, Askari must have painted many hundreds of paintings but his staple from the beginning to the very end was commissioned portraits of the high and mighty — ruling princes, governors, ministers, presidents and high officials and their wives. These were portraits of living dignitaries.

The second group was that of historical portraits. Thus, he was commissioned to paint portraits of the ancestors of the Nawab of Khairpur and also of Bahawalpur and earlier in India had restored and repainted the faded old portraits of the ancestors of the Raja of Mehmoodabad.

To this same category of historical portraits must be added the numerous portraits he made of the Quaid-e-Azam, founder of Pakistan, for hanging in offices and public buildings.

Another series of historical paintings, which are far more important achievements of the artist, are the seven large portraits of famous Mughal queens and princesses that are the work of a lifetime, having been painted from 1932 to 1957.

It was only to be expected, when he was catering to the tastes of the ruling princes and the aristocracy, that he should have painted for them a large number of nudes.

The fourth group is that of landscapes, which are idealized visions of Kashmir, mostly, but also include many large pictures of Karachi harbour, which are somewhat more realistic.

Contemporary Portraits

The portraits of contemporary personages were all commissioned jobs and naturally, they were expected to be as pleasing and flattering to the subject as possible. Of course, even within this constraint, the artist had a wide choice of styles but Askari chose to paint in the way that he thought would be most impressive and pleasing.

The person always looks stiff and solemn, with an expressionless face. He, and in a few cases she, is turned out in ceremonial dress and this receives as much attention of the artist as the face and perhaps more, if the laboriously filled details are considered.

A most ornate and theatrical setting is provided to the picture in the form of a fancy table in the foreground and plush curtains in the background. The curtains are only half pulled and behind them is revealed a garden landscape of the conventional type.

Mostly, the face and figure emerges out of a dark setting and the effect of contrast is strongly employed to bring out the personality of the subject.

There is heavy use of dark colours all over the picture and only the face has somewhat brighter colours but even here the effect is subdued and often one half of the face is in shadow.

Though the style does not change through the years and remains extremely formal, official and ceremonious, there is definitely a growing ability to capture the personality of



S. H. Askari with his wife

S. H. ASKARI

1907 (Dec. 29)	*Born at Jhansi, India.*
1919	*Joined M.A.O. School, Aligarh.*
1922	*Passed High School. Joined Roorki College of Engineering.*
1925	*Graduated from Roorki as engineer.*
1926-28	*Studied at Government School of Art and Craft, Lucknow.*
1928	*Went to London as assistant of Mr. Nathard, Principal of his school.*
1929	*Joined as teacher in the Lucknow Art School.*
1930	*Sent by government to London to copy portraits hanging in Buckingham Palace. Returned in six months.*
1930-35	*Taught in Lucknow Art School.*
1935-39	*Lived in England and Europe. For two years. Studied in Royal College of Art, London, under Sir William Rothenstein.*
1939	*Back in Lucknow. Painted large mural on Battle of Karbala, bought by Nawab of Rampur for Rs. 22,000. Appointed Vice-Principal.*
1949	*Came to Karachi.*
1969	*Died in Karachi.*

the subject. This is noticeable when we compare one of the earliest portraits of which there is pictorial record, namely the portrait of the Raja of Lucknow, painted in 1932, with the portrait of General Iskander Mirza, painted in 1953, when he was Secretary for Defence. Both are lifesize standing portraits.

In the first picture all the attention of the artist is devoted to the dress and the medals and jewels and sword and other decorative elements while in the second, the subject is wearing a lounge suit which offers no opportunity for decorative treatment. Therefore all the attention is devoted to the face which very clearly shows the hauteur of the man who was to impose martial law on the country in 1958 and to assume all the powers of the Martial Law Administrator. Still more striking is a later portrait, that of S. A. Hasnie, President of the F.A.O., painted in 1963 and now hanging in the Conference Hall of F.A.O. in Rome. A strong light plays on the face and there is effective use of contrast in playing up the features. What is more important, there is an expression on the face and not the usual glum and solemn look.

Thus, one can see a steady advance of the artist in gaining mastery over expression of personality in portraiture.

Worthy of special mention also are the lifesize standing portraits of Sir Morris Halett, Governor of the United Provinces in India and of his wife Lady Halett who used to learn painting from Askari. These were painted in 1942 and are being specially mentioned because they are an exception to the general observation that Askari's portraits show the subject enveloped in dark colours and the face is shown emerging from this gloom. Like the academic painters of 18th century England, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who taught that three-quarters of the colours in a painting had to be warm tones, Askari also made profuse use of burnt sienna and burnt umber. However in the portraits of the Haletts, with their white or pale coloured dresses, the paintings are done in a silver tonality and cool colours. Of course, as usual, they are both shown in very formal and ceremonial dress and every effort is made to give them a grand look, by showing many medals on the chest of Sir Morris and a huge fan of ostrich feathers in the hand of Lady Halett.

The artist's wife



Historical Portraits

The historical portraits painted by Askari include the long series of ancestors of the Nawab of Khairpur and of the Nawab of Bahawalpur.

The portraits of the Quaid also fall in the category of historical portraits because none of them was done from life but rather from photographs, after the death of the Quaid. He must have painted dozens of them during the twenty years that he lived in Pakistan, because he was well known in the high official circles in Karachi which was the capital of the country till 1962. Therefore, in many offices in the city and in the Governor's house, one comes across portraits of the Quaid by Askari. The official character of these pictures and the desire to make the portrait of the Father of the Nation as impressive and inspiring as possible, naturally makes the work extremely formal and stiff.

Queens and Princesses

All the portraits discussed above were commissioned jobs and the originals were naturally taken away by the client. However, there are seven portraits of Mughal queens and princesses that he painted for his own pleasure and which are the prized possession of his son Abid Askari, who is professionally a scientist but an artist by birth and by choice.

These paintings have been painted over a period of 28 years beginning with that of Queen Nur Jehan, wife of Emperor Jahangir, done in 1932 to that of Princess Roshan Ara, daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, painted in 1960. The other portraits represent Jodha Bai, wife of Emperor Akbar, Mumtaz Mahal, wife of Emperor Shah Jehan and Zeenat Mahal, wife of Emperor Aurangzeb. Then there is the portrait of Jahan Ara, daughter of Shah Jehan and two of Princess Zebunnissa, daughter of Aurangzeb, one showing her sitting and one standing.

Zebunnisa, daughter of Aurangzeb





Lady in traditional dress

In all these paintings, the figures emerge from the gloom of the background and a soft light falls on them from top right which enlivens the dark deep colours of the face and figure on one side and also helps to emphasize the third dimension of the form.

The face is soft, smooth, idealized, with no individuality or personality.

All the labour is spent on the gorgeous costumes of velvet and brocade and their folds and falls and designs. Much skill is displayed in painting the diaphanous scarves or dupattas of silk which hang from the shoulders in front of each figure. Askari claimed to have done much research on the accuracy of the costumes that he painted and took great care to dress the person in the right dress of the period. For example, he pointed out that the blouse worn with the "pishwaz' gown was short and not long, as worn now. Even the hemline of the gown was correctly shown, as it grew broad or narrow from period to period.

The same meticulous attention was paid to jewellery. Thus, he pointed out that the diamond necklace that Jahan Ara is shown wearing is not of cut diamond because cut diamond had not been introduced in her time. Some of the jewels and dresses that the persons are wearing and the fan that one of them is holding are based on authentic articles preserved in various museums — like the jewel on the cap of Zebunissa.

This loving study of details naturally led him to depict crowns, necklaces, pendants and brooches more minutely than the laws of perspective and light would justify.

Similarly, his skill in painting stuffs, with all their soft texture and golden lustre, is manifest in every painting and the way he catches their sheen and shimmer is remarkable.

In fact, the portrait becomes but an excuse for the display of skill in depicting gorgeous dresses and jewellery. This and the play of light are the most striking features while the human side of the portrait remains feeble.

It is interesting to note that with the passage of years, Askari's command of realistic portraiture grew and therefore the last picture in this series, namely Princess Roshan Ara, has a much more realistic face than all the others but since these are all such idealized and decorative pictures, the sudden appearance of realism comes as a surprise.

The Nudes

If Rembrandt was the ideal of Askari for the play of light on dark areas and for the depiction of colourful costumes, his models for the nudes were perhaps David and Ingres. The best portraits have a dramatic quality because of the play of light while the best nudes are classical in their coolness, calmness and balance and in the refinement and correctness of their drawing. They have all doll-like faces and conventional poses, often lying sideways, with head upraised on one arm which is resting on a pillow. The skin surface is marble smooth and even-coloured in a soft flesh tint. They have the delicacy of the nudes of Boucher, the 18th century French painter but not his liveliness for they are too stiffly posed. The third dimension is not emphasized and there is no play of light on the figures. Because they are so lifeless, they are not very erotic.

HAJI MOHAMMED SHARIF

The most famous miniature painter of Pakistan was Haji Mohammad Sharif, who was born in 1885 at Patiala and died in 1978 at Lahore.

Haji Sharif's grandfather was a court painter at Patiala and so was his father Basharat Ullah. The latter died when Sharif was still a child but even at the tender age of three, his career was settled for him when he was "employed" as one of the court painters of the Maharaja of Patiala. His training was entrusted to Lala Shaoo Ram who was one of the pupils of Basharat Ullah but later another eminent miniature painter, Ustad Muhammed Hussain Khan of Delhi, became his teacher. He also always acknowledged his debt to his mother who was an unsparing critic of his work and helped him to remove his shortcomings.

In 1924, his work was exhibited in London and won so much admiration that he was decorated as a Member of the British Empire. In 1945, he retired from service in Patiala at the age of 60 and came to Lahore. Here he was employed to teach at the Mayo School of Art and continued to do so till 1968 when he was again retired. In 1960, President Ayub Khan arranged an exhibition of his work and gave him a small stipend for life. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also did the same and so did Sadiq Hussain Qureishi, Chief Minister of West Pakistan. Towards the end of his life, his eyesight began failing and he could no longer paint. In December, 1978, he died.

His work is scattered all over India and also in foreign lands but in Pakistan the largest collection of some twentyfour paintings was acquired by the Idara Saqafat-e-Pakistan, Islamabad, for their National Art Gallery. Among private collectors, the largest collection is with Syed Wajid Ali of Lahore. A few paintings are with the National College of Art, the former Mayo School of Art, where he once taught.



Haji Mohammed Sharif by Anna Molka

HAJI MOHAMMAD SHARIF

1889	Born at Patiala, India.
1892	"Employed" as court painter by Maharaja of Patiala. Learned miniature painting from his father Basharat ullah Khan, Mohammad Hussain Khan of Delhi and Lala Shaoo Ram.
1924	Work exhibited in London. Awarded MBE (Member of the British Empire).
1945	Retired from service. Came to Lahore. Joined as teacher in Mayo School of Art.
1960	Big exhibition of his work arranged by order of President Ayub Khan.
1967	President's Medal for Pride of Performance.
1968	Retired from service.
1978 (Dec.)	Died in Lahore

Emperor Jahangir riding with Queen Nur Jahan



Like all miniature painters, he made copies of the masterpieces of the old masters but besides that he made his own innumerable original compositions. These mostly feature one or the other of the old Mughal Emperors whose features were memorized by the miniature painters as part of their training. Thus there are portraits by him of Akbar and Jahangir and the other Mughal kings. These show the bust with arms within an oval outline. The throne and the bolster cushion are elaborately decorated with arabesque design and so is the hem of the dress and collar and cuff. Always they are shown wearing many pearl necklaces and jewels and plumes on their turbans. He is very fond of stippling the surface of the dress., The face is sometimes in profile and sometimes three-quarter. Each has certain traditional features like the shaven face and big pointed moustache of Akbar. However, one does not expect much characterization in these decorative little miniatures.

Much more impressive are the equestrian portraits of the same kings and of unknown princes that Haji Sharif was fond of making. For example, there is an equestrian portrait of Shah Alam on a noble speckled mount. The king is sitting erect in the saddle holding the reins with the left hand and a long spear with the right. The face is in profile and enclosed in a nimbus. The horse is gently trotting, with one front leg raised.

Much more lively is the equestrian portrait of Emperor Jahangir and Queen Nur Jahan riding two splendid horses, side by side. The horses are shown running in very natural poses. Jahangir does not look like the grand person he appears in contemporary portraits and the queen could be any beautiful lady. She is wearing a jewelled crown even though she is out on a hunt and has a hawk on the right hand. The vast background of trees and mountains is very feeble but a small locality with a mosque and houses in the distance is in correct perspective.

Haji Sharif has also painted some elaborate kingly processions in which the king is riding on an elephant. A very impressive kingly procession shows Emperor Akbar riding on an elephant while a crowd of attendants walks along, in the foreground, and two horsemen in the front and four behind. The crowd is not formally arranged as the procession of Aurangzeb was, though the four horsemen behind are moving in pairs. The faces of these four look almost alike and those of the crowd too are not much differentiated except for the fact that some faces are bearded and others not. The lower figure of the elephant is hidden by the crowd but the head is well drawn. As usual, the horses are excellently done. It is the overall composition that makes the picture so impressive, with the elephant in the centre and in the foreground the crowd of walking attendants and two horsemen in front and four at the back. These latter are carrying two pennants in front and four at the back. Rising over it all is the howdah of the elephant on which Emperor Akbar is sitting, with the mahout or mahawat, the elephant driver, in the front and the umbrella bearer behind. Highest of all rises the colourful umbrella, the symbol of royalty.

Compared with the work of the great miniature painters of the Imperial Mughals, the work of Haji Sharif is just passable but in these latter days when miniature painting is almost forgotten even this is a matter of satisfaction. Certainly, the procession scenes are the most noteworthy contribution of the late Ustad and they show all the best characteristics of his work, his elaborate composition, his minute arabesque decoration and his superb drawing of horses in action.

Below: Prince Aurangzeb attacking an elephant turned wild.
On right: Jahangir facing a tiger during a hunt.





USTAD SHUJAULLAH

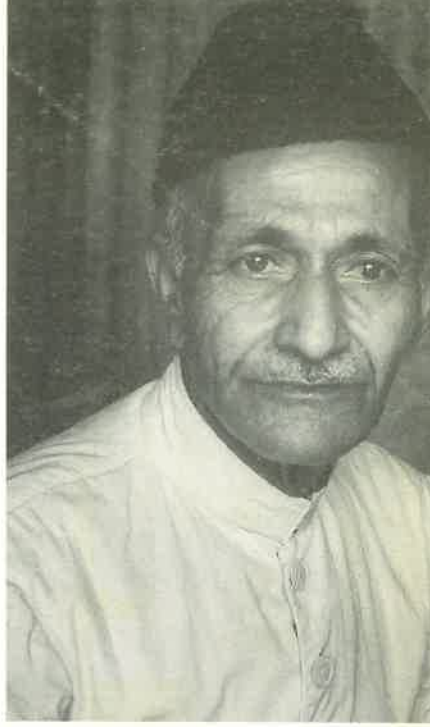
Ustad ShujaUllah was an accomplished miniature artist, cast in the mould of the great Mughal masters of old, from whom he was descended.

During the 1857 War of Independence, his ancestors migrated from Delhi to Alwar State and again during the Partition of 1947, he migrated from Alwar to Pakistan. For two years he lived in Rawalpindi and then came to Lahore where he worked as a freelance artist for long. From 1965 to 1968, he taught at the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University and came over to the National College of Art in 1968 when Haji Mohammed Sharif retired as teacher of miniature painting. Born at Alwar in 1916, he died in Lahore on 20 April, 1980.

From his father he learned the basic skills of his craft, which included the making of the "wasli" or cardboard on which the picture was painted. This was done by pasting together three sheets of paper and smoothing their surface. Then he learned the art of making paints of different colours with traditional ingredients, and the art of making brushes, thick and thin, with the hair of the squirrel's tail.

To become an accomplished miniature painter, Shujaullah had not only to learn painting but arabeque designing which is called Naqqashi. This was essential to learn because many of the details of the painting were filled with these designs, such as borders of dresses, jewellery, crowns, armour and, of course, the border of the painting.

As for the art of painting miniatures, Ustad Shujaullah could work in a number of styles such as Kangra, Rajput, Deccani and Mughal but of course he preferred the last one because for him this was the epitome of a whole culture and a way of life. As he used to say, every detail of the painting from building and garden to dress and armour and even shoes and caps reflected the culture of the people. For the late Ustad, this was unchanging, at least in his imagination and in his pictures although in reality it may have receded far into the past. Even the last drawing, a rough pencil sketch, that he made a day before his death, showed a doughty Mughal warrior or aristocrat clad in an angarkha or muslin coat, with a pointed flap tied on the right shoulder.



Ustad Shujaullah

USTAD SHUJAULLAH

1912	*Born at Alwar*
	Learned miniature painting from his father.
1947	*Migrated to Pakistan.*
1947-49	*Lived in Rawalpindi.*
1961-64	*Taught miniature painting in Fine Arts Department of Punjab University.*
1968-80	*Taught miniature painting in National College of Art, Lahore.*
1980 (Apr. 20)	*Died in Lahore.*



Naqqashi (floral patterns)

Emperor Jahangir





Rajput Lady sitting on terrace



Lady with a tanpura (stringed musical instrument)

His versatility is evident from the variety of paintings that he has left. There is, for example, the picture of the cowherd god Krishna, walking arm in arm with a "gopi" or peasant girl, while dark monsoon clouds lour above. The two are snuggling together under a sheet to protect themselves from the rain. The blue colour of Krishna, the dark god, is of course traditional but the yellow of his "dhoti" or loin cloth and the vermilion of the girl's gown and bodice and the olive green of the extensive grassfields in the background are all in the accepted manner of Kangra painting. in which deep rich colours are favoured as against the soft and sophisticated colours of Mughal painting.

Then, there are paintings done in the Indo-Persian style. The hills in the background have the same look of rising waves of the sea as in Persian painting, and the faces are oval, with Mongolian features. An example is the picture of Genghiz Khan which does convey some idea of the terrible world-conquerer. Of course, the painting lacks the richness of detail that we find in old Persian paintings but then this is the work of a 20th century artist working in an olden idiom.

There are also paintings done by him in the Rajput style, which arose after the advent of the Mughals in Indo-Pakistan. It was a development of the Jain manuscript illustration which was prevalent in Gujrat and Rajasthan also. While Mughal painting is realistic, Rajput is poetical.

An example of Rajput painting by Shujaullah is the picture of a Rajput princess amusing herself with fireworks at night. The tall figure standing with her face in profile, set off by the dark background, is just in the manner of the Rajput painters.

Another miniature that seems to have a Hindu subject and Rajput style shows a heavily draped crowned princess being embraced by an elderly woman who has put her arm round the neck of the princess lovingly. Again, the background is stark plain and dark which is in the style of the Rajput miniatures.

However, Ustad Shujaullah loved above all to paint in the Mughal style and Mughal subjects. Thus, we have his lavishly adorned miniature showing Akbar standing with his queen, Jodhabai. They are standing in a carpeted part of the palace near a beautiful pillar. In the background is a garden scene while beyond can be seen other buildings of the palace.

Though both Haji Sharif and Ustad Shujaullah were masters of the miniature in their own ways, the work of the latter is much more plain and simple and unadorned, the colours are softer and lighter, and the compositions less elaborate.

The late Ustad had many pupils but it was Bashir Ahmed who toiled hardest and longest to learn most from his teacher and he is carrying forward the work of the Ustad both in painting and in teaching because he is working in the same place that the Ustad held at the National College of Art, Lahore.

Naqqashi



SHEIKH AHMED



Sheikh Ahmed

Sheikh Ahmed (1901-1986) entered the art scene of Lahore and Karachi fairly late in life. He was born at Amritsar in 1901 and, after receiving some incomplete education in art at Calcutta and in engineering at Bombay, he left for the USA in 1926 and lived there till 1936, studying automobile engineering and cinematography. From 1936 to 1939, he studied at the Central School of Art in London. His merit was recognized when he was appointed as Assistant to Prof. Robins who was Head of the Department of Etching, Lithography and Design. He also received the rare honour of being accepted as a member of the Senefelder Club of Lithographers of which other distinguished members were Henri Matisse and Augustus John. Because he excelled in drawing, he won his earliest laurels in book illustration. For the Oxford University Press, he illustrated Philpott's book "The White Camel" and for the Country Life Publications, he illustrated two small books, "Bruno and Brunette" and "Dorkings of Dorki".

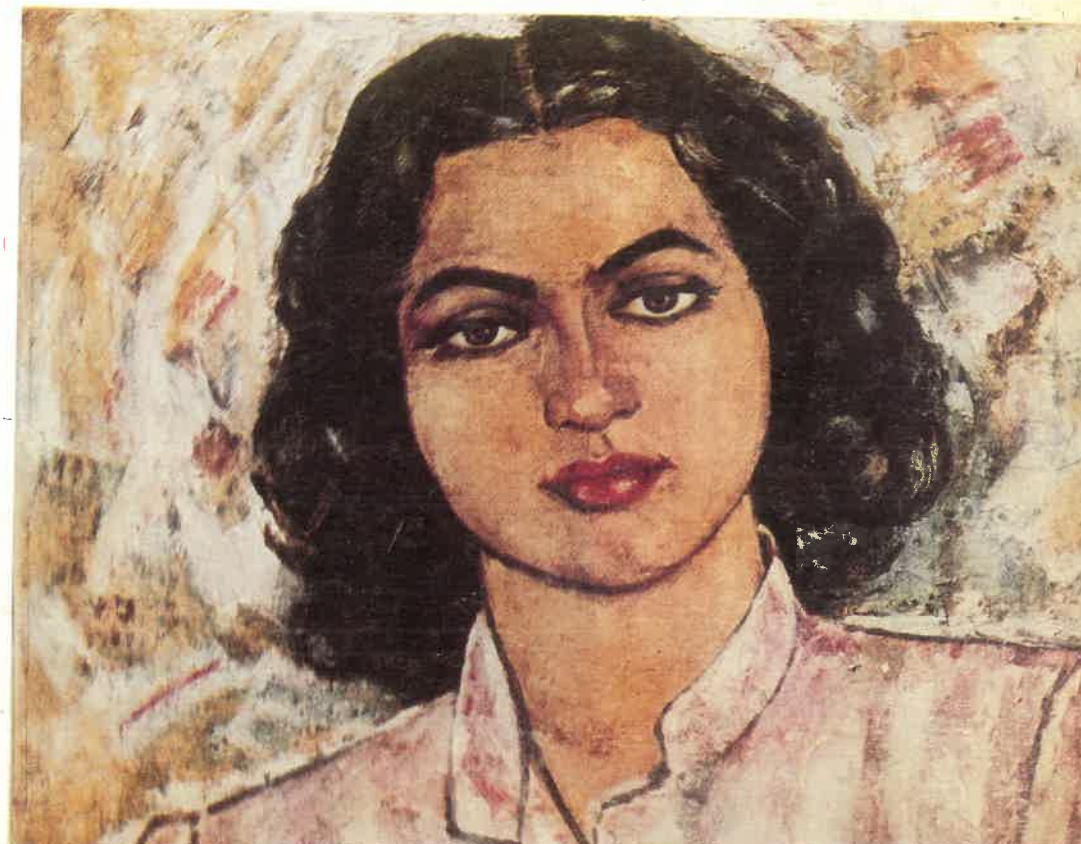
In 1939, he returned to Amritsar and during the next ten or eleven years worked in various government publicity departments at Lahore, Muzaffarabad and Simla. In 1949 he began teaching at the Mayo School of Art, Lahore, but left in 1951 permanently for Karachi.

Here he got work that was after his own heart and brought out the best in him. The American publisher, Silver Burdett and Co., were publishing a series of books on the history of Pakistan in Urdu for schools and he was commissioned to illustrate them. He put his heart and soul into the work and did painstaking research to find the facial types of those historical figures, their dresses, arms, houses, forts and all the other material setting of the times. With matchless draughtsmanship, he made 500 large pictures of these subjects, lightly painted in colour wash, and these were duly printed in reduced size. The originals were still in his possession when he died, and are now in government custody together with his other possessions (mainly books) till the question of succession is decided.

SHEIKH AHMED

1901	*Born at Amritsar, India. Incomplete education in art at Calcutta and in engineering at Bombay.*
1926	*Left for USA. Came to London. Studied in Central School of Art.*
1939	*Married Anna Molka. Returned to Amritsar.*
1949-50	*Taught in Mayo School of Art*
1951	*Moved to Karachi. Illustrated Urdu textbooks of history of Pakistan. Made 500 coloured drawings.*
1966	*Made big mural on jute cloth for Pakistan pavilion in New York World Fair.*
1986	*Died in Karachi*

The Dark Beauty



He was a frank and sincere realist but, as he taught his students, he did not paint appearances only as seen by the eye, rather the whole structure as understood by the mind. Since the subject of his paintings is mostly the human form, he made a thorough study of the subject, with the result that he was able to reconstruct the human figure in all the variety of gestures and postures.

There is a purity of line and delicacy of finish in his work that has a classical quality. He states the facts of line and form in the briefest terms. Neither does he fuss over the lines nor mull over the colours, fitting the means to the end with an economy that pleases.

What helped him was his cool objectivity. Together with a classical restraint in style is calmness of outlook that steers clear of exaggeration and idiosyncracies. The result is that there are no emotional flourishes in the line and no romantic fuzziness in the colouring and tonal treatment.

Because of his experience in the field of publicity, his layout is always balanced and sometimes quite striking. Thus, his picture of the Khattak Dance shows a line of dancers but the arrangement is most unusual. The face of only one dancer is shown closeup in the bottom left corner and his hand is upraised all along the right edge of the picture. Behind this face, half hidden, is another face quite close up, while behind that, much smaller, is another face, and then three full figures fairly distant and small.

Similarly, his painting of the Governor General's Bodyguard shows one face centrally placed, in full focus, while another is shown lower in a subsidiary position and in bare outline, with pupil-less eyes. The space division of the picture is remarkable and creates quite an abstract design, if the content is ignored.

Besides the illustrations for the books of history, he made scores of lightly coloured drawings on paper in water colour showing the common figures and sights and scenes of the country. Thus, he made pictures of the Barber in the Punjab Village, the Fishermen on the Indus, the Village Bard playing a stringed instrument, the Kashmiri Papier Mache Worker, the Kashmiri Rug Embroiderer, the Pipe Player at a Wedding and many more such .

He excelled in portraiture and has left many incomplete and some complete portraits done in oil on canvas. One entitled "Radiant Womanhood" was printed on the cover of the "Pakistan" Quarterly, Summer 1954 issue. It shows a robustly healthy young woman with full round cheeks, broad oval face and thick neck. Her nose is long and well formed and her lips are slightly thick and sensuous. The eyebrows are arched and the large eyes, not fully open, are gazing right in front, calmly and confidently.

The healthy sun tan and bronzed complexion is light on one side of the face and dark on the other, while every rise and fall of the facial surface is well indicated by delicate variation of tone. Touches of grey-green emphasise the raised contours on the dark side of the face, such as the chin, one nostril and one cheek bone.

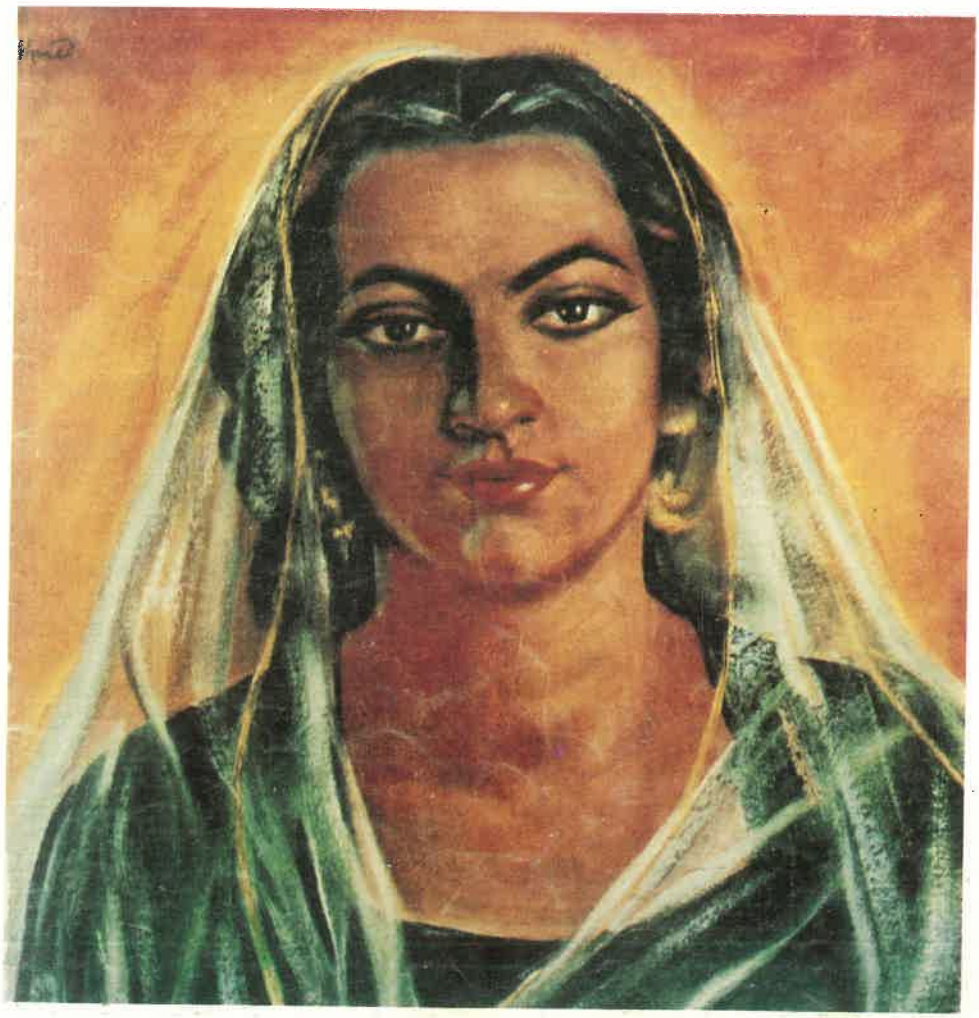
Another fine painting entitled "The Dark Lady" was printed in the "Pakistan" Quarterly, Vol. 111, No. 2. in 1953. It again shows a radiantly healthy young woman with a round face, large long eyes, arched eyebrows, thick sensuous lips, all framed within jet black locks of hair. The head is placed on a long neck and both are slightly tilted for greater effect. The colour treatment is more flat but the red lips are fully shaded and the treatment of the eyes is specially emphasised because they have a world of meaning in them, love and care and understanding. It is a most remarkable personality, beautifully captured in line and colour.

It is not possible now to comment on other paintings of Sheikh Ahmed, because all that he left was taken into police custody, but it is unlikely that there are very many oil paintings. In meetings with him that this writer often had, he always showed his coloured drawings of common Pakistani life rather than oil paintings and portraits. He never held an exhibition of his work. What the general public saw was the illustrations that he made for the history books. He also came to public notice for some designs that he made. Thus, in 1954, he was one of the sixteen artists of the Far East and the Middle East

who were invited by the famous American glass manufacturers, Steuben Glass, to provide art work which they would render in glass. Shaikh Ahmed contributed a drawing based on one of the ancient Moenjodaro seals, showing a unicorn, with a manger in front and some undeciphered writing above. Later, an exhibition was held of these glass objects and a book published. He also designed a sword of honour for the Pakistan Navy. Another feather in his cap was a huge mural on jute cloth that he designed for the Pakistan Pavilion at the New York World Fair of 1966.

He died in 1986 without giving fullest expression to his immense talent.

Radiant Womanhood





Anna Molka Ahmed

Many-sided Painters

ANNA MOLKA AHMED

Anna Molka painted the people and places of Pakistan for the fifty-five years that she lived in this country (1939-1994). She was a very prolific and versatile artist and her work includes landcsapes, portraits, figure studies, large figure compositions, war paintings, religious paintings, philosophical paintings, partition riots paintings, drawings and sculpture.

She exercised immense influence on young artists, mainly women, by her work and by her teaching as Head of the Department of Fine Arts in the Punjab University from 1940 to 1972 and as a Professor till 1978.

Landscapes

The most distinctive contribution she has made is in landscape painting, both in choice of subject and style of painting. By precept and example, she introduced in painting the study of the common rural scene and rural life, as against the idealized and poetical version often painted before.

This was partly due to her down-to-earth and realistic approach to the art of painting and partly to her attitude as a foreigner for whom even the drab and commonplace village scenes of the Punjab had an exotic charm.

Her landscape is not generalized but the exact record of a particular place painted on location. It is always peopled with men and women unlike the school of Lahore landscape painters.

She neither distorts the different features of the landscape that make up the scene nor adopts strange bizarre perspectives nor does she cast lurid light effects.

However, she does cast the scene in a proper firm balanced design and executes the details with a lot of freedom and gusto.

Since she paints with a palette knife, the work is bold and not fine. The form is roughly adumberated in patches of colour and not meticulously shown in detail.

She heightens the colours so that the drab earth turns flaming orange and the dusty trees become verdant green; the shadows are mauve and purple while the usual wan pale sky of this region becomes bright blue, shot with green and purple and yellow and red.

She does not practice tonal painting which means that she does not use a light and a dark tone of the same colour in the lighted and the shadowed areas, respectively, but rather will use complementary colours such as green and red, blue and orange, purple and yellow,of which the first in each pair is darker and the second lighter (has more light). This makes her paintings very colourful, almost flamboyant. The impression is accentuated by the use of thick paint in impasto style laid on with the knife and left in separate patches of fresh colour without smearing or smoothing it or mixing it with any other colour.

She uses the palette of the Impressionists and follows their teachings in many respects except that she uses black which they did not and except that she avoids the delicacy of touch and minute careful stippling or dotting that many Impressionists practised .

Her work is characterized by vigorous swinging slashing strokes, thick daubing of paint, use of high keyed, high value colours and great gusto and animation.

For all these reasons, one could call her work Expressionist but remember that she does not distort and deform the subject as the Expressionists did nor does she try to create weird or bizarre effects like them.

"Jinnah Gardens" is not her best landscape but it is typical of her work because it exaggerates her style. The garden turns into squirts and sprays and whorls and cascades of colour. The trees look like fireworks and the ground like a carpet and the sky like heaven itself. Anna Molka said that she thought the painting would look fine in a child's room but there is this element of childlike exuberance of colour and style in all her paintings, not to this extent but present nevertheless.

The biggest and best landscape she has done is "The Punjab Village" (4 ft. by 6 ft.) which she claims is the biggest landscape ever painted outdoors on location

It is a vast scene, typical of her expansive style, and the way she has organized the different features in due proportion and with full coherence, is remarkable. Only the huge haystacks on the left and the huts on the right, in the middle distance, have some structure and solidity, while, for the rest, it is all play of colour for which she has an excuse in the free forms of the clouds above and the green fields below.

"Murree Hills" is another of her excellent landscapes. Again, it shows skill in designing a vast scene with many details. In the middle is a broad distant view of houses on the hills. In the foreground is the balcony of a house, which, by contrast, gives distance to the scene, while in the background are wooded hills rising diagonally to left and right.

Yet another major landscape is "Punjab University" (3 ft. by 6 ft.) in which an attractive architectural subject has been painted, with its many turrets and arches, all framed within a thick cluster of trees. The red colour of the building and the bright green of the trees enliven the painting and provide naturally the contrast of complementary colours. Even the side in shadow has not been darkened much. The lawn in the middle foreground has interesting chequered effects.

The weakest part is the overhanging branches of the trees on top right and the masses of trees on the left. The former is no more than a sprinkle of dots, dark green, blue and some red, while the latter is just a smear of green paint, meant to pass for trees. In the "Murree Hills" landscape also the trees are weak, both in the distant and the close view .

The success of her landscapes lies in the ability to organize a vast scene in a tight coherent design; in using bright, high value, high pitch colours and maintaining colour harmony which is easier in soft muted colours; and finally in the vibrant agitated colour application which animates and enlivens the scene. Of course, full command of perspective and ability to show varying distances and to maintain atmospheric harmony are essential to any good landscape and these are notable features of her work.

Portraits

Apart from numerous commissioned portraits, she has painted many for her own pleasure and these, interestingly, include portraits of prominent artists and a few writers. Also she has painted a large number of portraits of common humble people of all types.

The range of her style can be illustrated by the rather early portrait of Prof. Muhammad Shafi, in which she has tried to stick close to the contours and the colours of the man's face. It is uncharacteristic in its detailed drawing, limited range of colours, almost in one flesh tint, and in the use of brush and of thin paint. The structure of the head is emphasised.

One of her best and most characteristic is her portrait of the painterly calligraphist, Shafique Farooqi.Here neither is she bothered to draw the features in detail nor to bring out the structure of the head but to catch the play of strong light on the face and to translate this light and shade into a pattern of bright colours quite different from the "local colour" of the face. The highlighted area is flaming orange and the shadowed parts in cerulean blue while the middle tones are in light yellowish orange. The darkest areas are in burnt sienna. Inspite of all this free colouring and impulsive colour application, she catches well the personality of the sitter.



A Kashmiri peasant carrying a child

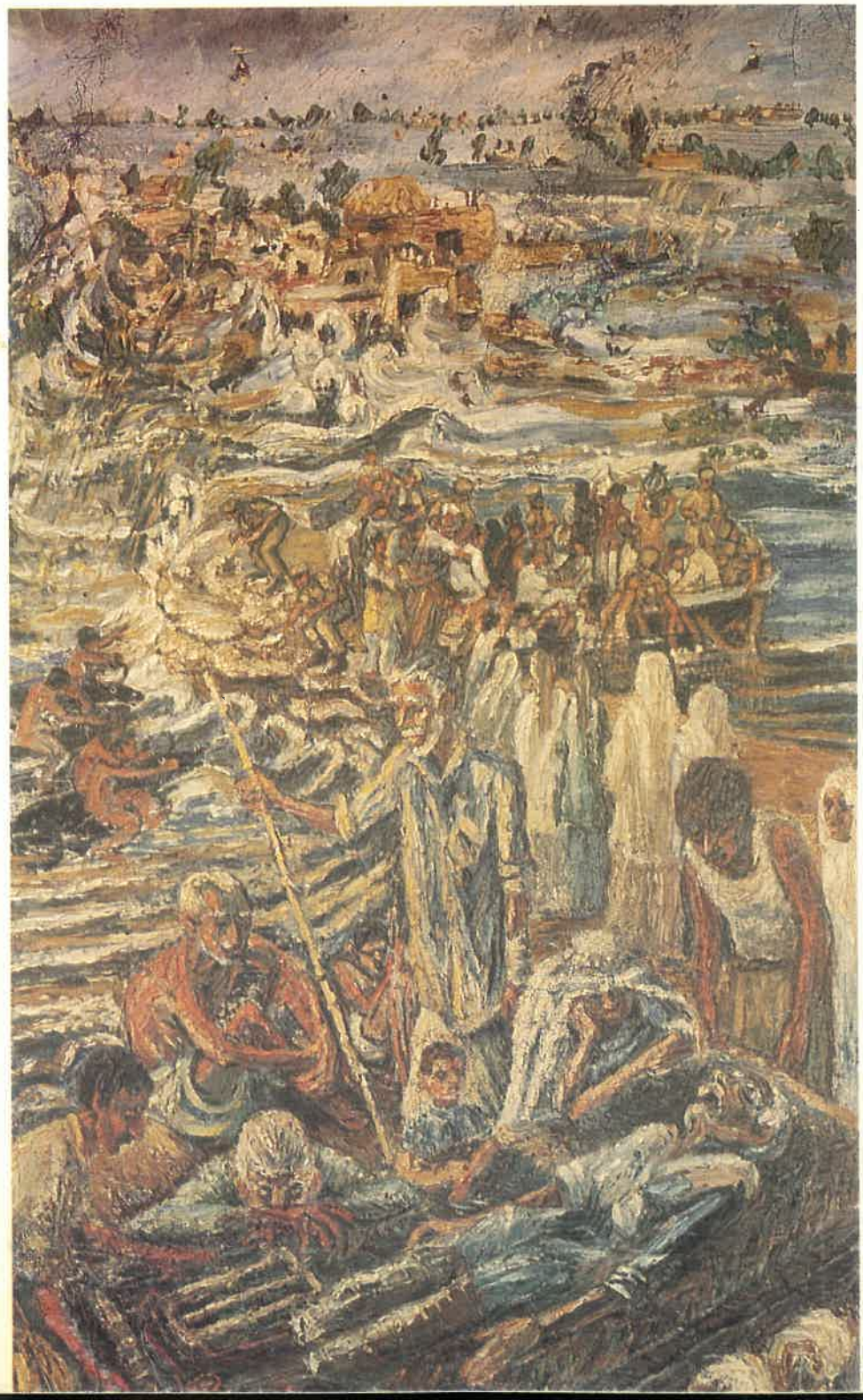
A Punjabi peasant's wife bringing lunch for her husband in the fields.



At the other extreme is her portrait of Shakir Ali in which the aim of catching the personality is achieved not through playing glowing colours on the face but by exaggerating the looks and features almost to the limit of deforming them. Heavy hanging brows and scowling face make an ungainly picture but that is her way of catching the personality of the sitter. Less unattractive is the portrait of Khalid Iqbal, eminent landscapist, in which heavy dark shadows are shown under the eyes, created by a strong light high up.

In her self portraits too she shows the same variation of style. An early self-portrait of 1952 shows her young, pretty and ruddy with health. It is painted smoothly in shades

The raging and ravaging Flood



ANNA MOLKA AHMED

1917 (Aug. 13)	*Born in London.*
1935 (August)	*Embraced Islam*
1939	*Qualified from Royal College of Art, London.*
1939 (Sept.)	*Married Sheikh Ahmed who was then at Central School of Arts and Crafts, London.*
1939 (Oct.)	*Came to Amritsar (India) with husband.*
1940 (June)	*Joined Punjab University to start Art Department.*
1940-72	*Worked as Head of Department. Introduced Fine Arts as elective subject in Inter B.A. and M.A. Then started B.F.A. and M.F.A.*
1972-74	*Worked as Professor in Art Department.*
1975-79	*Part-time Lecturer*
1979	*Made Professor Emeritus by Punjab University*
1963	*Tamgha-e-Imtiaz*
1969	*President's Award for Pride of Performance*
1982	*Quaid-e-Azam Award by Pakistan National Council of the Arts.*
1968-69	*Solo exhibitions at Karachi.*
1992	*Solo exhibitions at Lahore and Islamabad.*
1992	*Published book of poems.*
1994 (Apr. 21)	*Died at Lahore.*



Chhota Dergai village, near Lahore. (4 ft. x 6 ft.)

of pink, yellowish in the lighted and purplish in the dark areas. There is no caricaturing of the drawing and no impulsive roughness in the colour application.

Another portrait of 1980 shows her in a black mood. The beetling brows cast heavy shadows on the eyes, the lips are tilted in a scowl, the eyes look down and sideways, half closed, and the head is placed haughtily on the shoulder over which she looks back.

Pictures of the common people do not deserve to be called portraits because the personality of the sitter is in such cases completely subdued to the purposes of the artist who begins to treat it as the representation of an idea, like the idea of a blind beggar or the demented man with a wide-eyed wondering look. She entitles the latter picture "Why?" which means that the man becomes only an idea to her.

She has painted very few portraits of women and certainly none of pretty women. One commissioned portrait of a woman professor was rejected by the sitter because she did not think it was a good enough representation of her. Perhaps it was not very complimentary, which it never is, except in some of her self-portraits, but the characterization is quite effective.

Figure Paintings

The idea and the subject becomes all the more prominent in her figure paintings like "The Bride", "The Punjabi Farmer" "The Mujahid" and others. These are fairly good illustrations in which there is very little characterization and more emphasis on the costume and the setting. "The Mujahid" is the most powerful as far as characterization goes while "The Bride" and "The Farmer" are just ordinary faces plainly drawn and painted. "The Music Lesson" is more of a painting and a work of art because here the two figures of the music master and the girl playing the sitar are painted in broad areas in an overall design which has many other such areas in the background.



Poring Deep on Life

Large Figure Compositions

Much higher in the scale are the large figure compositions in which many figures and details of background are effectively organized in a telling unity.

"The Refugees" (4 ft. by 8 ft.), which shows the great Partition migration from India into Pakistan, is the most ambitious such painting of Anna Molka. A vast concourse is shown moving forward and order is imposed on it all by making it converge towards a bright building in the distance at top left which is the goal, the Promised Land, of the immigrants.

The tragedy of their suffering is shown by the ragged condition of the crowd while the glory of achieving their goal is symbolized by the golden light that suffuses the whole picture. It pours in from top right and bathes all the figures and the scene. A very difficult subject has been very ably handled and a memorable subject has been befittingly celebrated in paint.

Other noteworthy large figure compositions are "Muharram", "The Flood", "The Mourners" and others.



Fortitude in Age

War Paintings

The artist painted numerous commissioned pictures of some unforgettable actions fought in the 1965 war with India and a few of the 1971 war and of the individual heroes.

There are paintings of the actions fought at Wagah, at the Quaisar-e-Hind and at the Perimetre in 1965 and at Kanjeri Pul in 1971. For all these, the artist studied carefully the site of the action and the military authorities helped by reconstructing the scene, as far as possible.

About the action at Batapur, where Major Tajammul Husain blew up the bridge on the BRB Canal just in the nick of time to halt the advancing India tanks, she painted two pictures: one 4 ft. by 6 ft. for Maj. Tajammul Husain which concentrated on the military personnel and their heroic action and one 4 ft. by 10 ft. for herself in which she emphasized the terror of the people caught between the two armies. This was later acquired by the army and now hangs in the GHQ at Rawalpindi.



The war paintings are meticulously reconstructed illustrations of certain memorable events and the portraits of heroes are idealized formal pictures meant to inspire love and admiration for the heroes. Working under these requirements, the artist is hardly free to indulge in self-expression and the pursuit of purely aesthetic values.

Philosophical Paintings

The interesting group that one might call Philosophical Paintings was done wholly for self-satisfaction and self-expression. These are the product of her old age when she began to reflect deeply on life and death. Most of them have some abstract idea or some moral as the theme. Obviously, these pictures will be judged on artistic merits and not on philosophical considerations, but the fact that such paintings have been attempted at all is a definite contribution to art in Pakistan.

One of the best is entitled "We Come with Nothing and We Go with Nothing". Here a solitary naked man is shown standing helplessly on the seashore, his dark figure silhouetted by light coming from the setting sun at the back. Quite a dramatic picture.

"Kismet" is another such in which a figure is being whisked away by a squall of wind. It illustrates a favourite idea of the artist that we have no control on the direction which our life takes; all depends on Kismet.

"The Death of the Artist" shows her lying dead and the angels of good and evil struggling to snatch her.

"The Dance of Death"

By far the most impressive of all these is her huge "Dance of Death", painted in the tradition of many such representations of this macabre subject made by the artists of Europe after the calamitous Black Death that ravaged the continent in the 14th century.

Its six panels spread over 24 ft. by 8 ft. and show grinning skeletons dancing in the background and laughing at the futile foolish doings of men. The entire rise and fall of human civilization, is shown, from its first blossoming in Egypt and India to its senseless self-destruction by a nuclear blast and the final relapse into the stone age from which man began.

Landlords and Plutocrats
Nuclear Holocaust
Relapse into Stone Age



The details are too many to describe but the grandeur of the conception and the skill of the execution can be fully acknowledged. This enormous painting is the climax and culmination of her career as an artist.

"Hell" and "Resurrection"

Besides this, there are three huge paintings she did in 1985, entitled "Heaven", "Hell" and "The Day of Resurrection" or "Qiyamat". By the seriousness of their theme, the grandeur of the style and the magnitude of the scale, they are epical and monumental paintings. Each consists of three panels with a total area of 9 ft. by 16 1/2 ft., which means they are the biggest paintings painted in Pakistan, except for the murals of Sadequain.

However, this work is distinguished by the obvious earnestness and emotionalness of the statement. Anna Molka must have dredged the very depths of her being for images to people these paintings which she considered her last testament in art.

Apart from ingenuity of imagination, it is a feat of designing for, not only has each painting a total overall design but each panel is complete in itself.

All three subjects have been looked at from a distance and treated as landscapes for this does not involve the detailed drawing of figure postures and facial expressions that a close view would have entailed.

Almost everything is painted conceptually and not realistically, that is, shorthand token signs are used to depict most of the objects and persons. Looked at closely, they are extremely crude but she has tried to crowd so many features in the picture that more detailed and careful rendering was not possible or perhaps was not considered necessary, for after all, this is her style in landscape painting.

The entire beauty of the paintings lies in the difficult composition of such huge and crowded scenes and in the wonderful control of a uniform tone or pitch of colour over such a large area and thirdly, in the distribution of light and its total light effect.

Photographs of Anna Molka Ahmed's work are printed here by courtesy of her daughter, Tahira Ayaz.

SADEQUAIN

Sadequain was the most prolific artist of Pakistan. He was wholly self-taught and attended no art school. By dint of sheer native talent, he groped his way forward and forged his own style, which after some tentative efforts, soon crystallized into a very distinctive and personal idiom.

He was quite capable of painting realistic faces and figures, if he wanted. There are a few good examples of such early work, as "Hard-earned Rest", in which the driver is shown lying asleep in his rickshaw; or "The Worker", (1953) showing a hefty labourer digging with a spade, or "Quenching his Thirst", (1953) showing a sturdy kneeling man drinking from a raised jug.

But probably he thought that such straight-forward realistic pictures were not "modern" enough. So he made many puzzle pictures in which ambiguous images were presented of people looking like things and things looking like people. For example, a rehel (bookrest with two interlocking panels or boards) in which the two outstetched boards looked like the outstretched palms of a human hand; or a sitar (stringed musical instrument with long shaft) which looked like a human figure. Many of these paintings were designed by him for the title pages of Urdu books and magazines.

Obviously, this visual pun could not be extended over a large number of images in an elaborate composition. It was just a casual trick or a random sally. For ordinary normal expression, the model in his mind was highly conventional Ajanta type drawings and paintings that he may have seen in the Urdu magazines of those days when people loved art to be poetical.

Sadequain therefore painted women and even men in dance poses with hips sticking out one way and torso the other way and the head again reversed, in the famous S shape. The figure outlines were always flowing and rhythmic while the figures were full and fleshy. The faces were made into elogated ovals with the eyes tilted up and outward. The large mural he painted for Karachi Airport in 1957 is an example of that style.

From the beginning, his work was dominated by linework and the painting was largely flat and restricted in range of colour.

Another stereotype that he developed was slightly nearer to life. In 1957 he lived for some time in Quetta and was fascinated by the Balochi women with their long red embroidered frocks, gathering at the public tap to fetch water. He painted many pictures showing these colourful figures, with poetical poses and stylized faces and features and highly ornamented dresses.

That lasted for some years. The murals painted in the Central Excise Land Customs Club in 1959 and at the Services Club in 1959 are examples of this work.

He had to break away from these cliches in 1961 to paint the huge mural in the Head Office of the State Bank of Pakistan at Karachi, called "Time's Treasuries", in which he showed the intellectual advance of man from the time of Socrates to that of Iqbal and Einstein. Here he is coming near to the style that he was to adopt finally. It is all basically a linear creation, with the enclosed spaces painted in flat colours. Since all the figures are heavily robed, the bodies are invisible and only the folds of the dresess are painted, plus the faces and hands. In front of the figures are their books or scientific instrument or other identifying objects while at the back are some buildings related to the personalities depicted in the mural, like the Tower of Pisa with Galileo.

The design quality of the composition is a dominant feature of the mural, achieved by making some of the figures to sit and others to stand, some to face this way and some that, some to lean sideways and in the centre of them all, the placidly composed figure of



Portrait of Sadequain by Shehla Rahman (pastel).

SADEQUAIN

1930 (June) Born at Amroha (India)
1948 Graduated from Agra University. Migrated to Pakistan.
1951-52 Programme Assistant in Radio Pakistan, Karachi.
1954 First solo exhibition (at Quetta)
1955 First important exhibition (at residence of H.S. Suhrawardy, then Foreign Minister of Pakistan in Karachi). Painted first mural (in Jinnah Hospital, Karachi).
1960 Awarded Tamgha-e-Imtiaz (medal). First Prize in National Exhibition.
1961 Adjudged "Laureate Biennale de Paris"
1962 President's Medal for Pride of Performance. Exhibition at Musee Maison du Culture, Le Havre, France.
1963 Visited USA, held exhibition in Washington D.C.
1964 Illustrated "L'Etranger" by Camus.
1967 Executed mural at Mangla Dam.
1968 Executed mural "Quest for Knowledge" in Library of Punjab University.
1970 Calligraphy of Sura Rahman
1973 Mural on ceiling of Lahore Museum.
1974 Tour of Middle East and many exhibitions there.
1976 T.V. film made on Sadequain called "Mojza-e-Fun".
1981-82 Tour of India, many exhibitions held, many murals painted.
1984 (Dec.) Admitted to Jinnah Hospital.
1985 Paintings made on verses of Faiz. First floor of Frere Hall, Karachi, given to him to make his art gallery.
1986 Started painting big mural for ceiling of the big hall.
1987 (Feb. 10) Died in Karachi.



"Mosam-e-gul hai tumharay baam per aanney ka naam." Verse by Faiz

the sitting Buddha, with the face of Sadequain. The folds of the dresses are used as devices to make all sorts of linear patterns. A small break in the row of figures is filled with stylized conical hills on top of which is a round sun with long arrow-like rays radiating, longer on either side and shorter above and below This sun became almost like his signature and was repeated in many compositions .

Curved Pointed Blades

Later in the same year, 1961, he participated in the Biennale of Paris and won the honour of becoming a Laureate Biennale de Paris. The work which he exhibited there was "The Last Supper" (84" x 36").

For this he developed a new style which he was to repeat for years with variations. Sitting human figures were suggested by using curved pointed blades for limbs, long pointed triangles for feet and diamond shapes or triangle shapes for heads. Similar shapes of elongated crescents were used to indicate the lap by connecting the two knees. Many smaller strokes were made across the breast, as if they were ribs. Not all the blades and spikes were identifiable as parts of a figure. Innumerable were added just to make a crowded composition, some in gray to suggest a back row in the distance.

It was an ingenious way of suggesting figures and of making a composition with crescent shapes and triangles and diamonds. There must have been something in it to impress the International Jury of Art Critics which adjudged Sadequain as the Laureate Biennale de Paris.

The idea of these spikes and blades was suggested to him by the cacti that he saw all around him during his stay at Gadani Beach near Karachi in 1954. His "Blue Cactus" (1957) shows thick stemmed sharp pointed spikes sticking out of the cactus plant outward and upward. In his "Sprouting Hands" (1958) he is already imagining these upturned sharp blades to be human hands. By linking two such blades, he was suggesting human arms. The rest of the figure was left to the imagination but at places two legs were suggested by two long triangles pointing down. A crowded composition was made by merging together scores of these shapes, thickly outlined in black and filled with flat colours in light and dark tones.

In his "Industry and Agriculture", the composition was more sparse and lucid and the figures more clearly indicated, completed with a head of sorts and two arms, again using the upturned spike or sharp blade as the forearm. While human figures were suggested by these blade forms in the centre of the picture, on either side were suggested images of plants and factories. For plants the upward tapering spikes make an

Part of painting on ceiling of Sadequain Gallery in Liaquat Hall (former Frere Hall), Karachi.



appropriate image while for the dense group of factory buildings, the form has been modified. Vertical strips are indicated whose tops end in a diagonal curve and again create that curving pointed spike form. Many other curves and arcs and lines are introduced to create a densely intersected design, somewhat sparse in the middle, where the figures are shown.

All through the 60s, he continued to make profuse use of this motif. Sometimes the spikes were made thin like needles and thorns (as in "Three Existences", in which three columns are built up with criss-cross lines, bristling with points on either side and above and below) while sometimes these pointed blades and shafts were made very thick and joined to make a zigzag composition as in "Two Sitting Figures" (1962). Sometimes these shafts and curves were shown having a raised curved surface, as if solid. The vertical shafts were pointed and then given some sort of a head while the sideways stretching pointed spikes were made to look like hands. Many such phantasmagoric human figures were made with the same basic cactus form that he discovered in Gadani.

Mangla Mural

In 1967 he painted in three months the huge mural in the power house of the Mangla Dam. Covering an area of 180 feet by 23 feet, it is by far the largest mural painted in Pakistan. The theme is again the progress of man as in the State Bank mural but here it is not advance in thought only but in conquest of nature. It is entitled "The Saga of Labour". The artist begins by showing man using his muscle power to break stones and ends by showing him conquering space and looking down upon the earth from high up through a telescope.

After the Mangla mural, in the same year 1967, Sadequain painted four murals at Lahore: two for the Punjab University Auditorium, one for the University Library and one for the Punjab Public Library. The year 1968 was even more productive than 1967 because he held five monthly exhibitions at Karachi in the unfinished auditorium of the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, from August to December.

First of all he made a "miniature" of the Mangla Dam mural in one-thirtysixth of the original size, which came to 28 feet by 4 feet in 4 panels. It was not an exact replica and therefore was entitled "Variation on Mangla"

Then he started painting a new series called The House of Cards, in which playing cards were painted with expressive character faces, making the king a tragic figure with a crown of thorns, the Queen, a wicked tigress and the Knave a cunning tycoon who comes between the king and the queen.

The figures, as usual are drawn with thick black lines, making all sorts of linear patterns on and around the face and the figure.

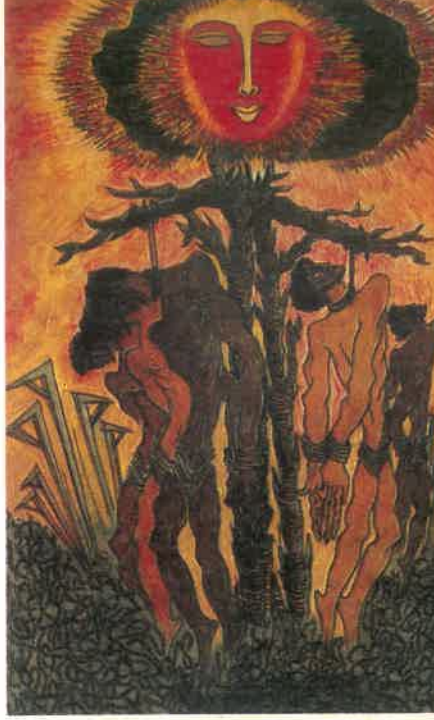
Then he painted the Hope Series, a number of macabre paintings in one of which a headless man is lying on the ground, with one hand upraised holding the head on which a raven has made his nest and is sitting. Behind this head is painted a large sun, which is supposed to be the sun of hope.

The figure has been drawn with much elongated limbs having wavy outlines, entirely fanciful and caricatured.

Hope 11 is even more weird and wild in conception and execution than Hope I for it shows another figure lying on the ground with severed head and again both upraised hands holding a skull from whose eye socket a snake is issuing.

The upraised knees and legs and the upraised hands are all straight bands with wavy outlines, entirely fanciful and caricatured.

Whereas the figure in Hope I was jet black, in Hope 11 it is white against a black ground. Again a sun is shown back of the head.



"Ham jo tareek raahon main maarey ga-ay
Daar ki khushk tehni pey waarey ga-ay."

Faiz

More normal in configuration are faces painted in"The Obsessed"series. Here faces are painted with wild looks and glaring eyes as if possessed. Only a few linear strokes with a thick brush are used to make the caricatured face. The eyes are round circles with dots, the nose is one line and the mouth one short dash. The hat and the bust are jet black with the collar white.

Other pictures in the series also show faces with wild haunted looks by making the eyes round with heavy shadows under them and glaring so that the white of the eyes shines balefully. Strong contrasts of white and black are used in the picture and the drawing is in a few simple strokes, mostly straight lines.

More characteristic of Sadequain was the series "Hybrid" in which half-beast, half-human creatures were vaguely suggested by dense black vertical strokes of the same spikes and blades variety mentioned earlier. In "Hybrid II', a row of six chairs was made to look like human beings, in a fanciful way. The rendering was through the same thick black strokes, mostly straight and partly angled and often triangular with sharp long angles pointing down.

In his monthly exhibition of September, 1968, he commemorated the war of September, 1965 and paid tribute to the martyrs in a mural entitled "Shaheed" (18 ft x 6 1/2 ft.).

Apart from this there were a number of paintings on the theme of war, such as "Confrontation" and "Triumph" which were patterns made up mostly of vertical lines in black, appropriately crossed with horizontal elements to make a design.

In "Confrontation" a thick bundle of vertical lines represented the forces of life and knowledge and another such stood for the forces of death and ignorance. In the first were

"War and Peace", part of mural on ceiling of Sadequain Gallery, Karachi.



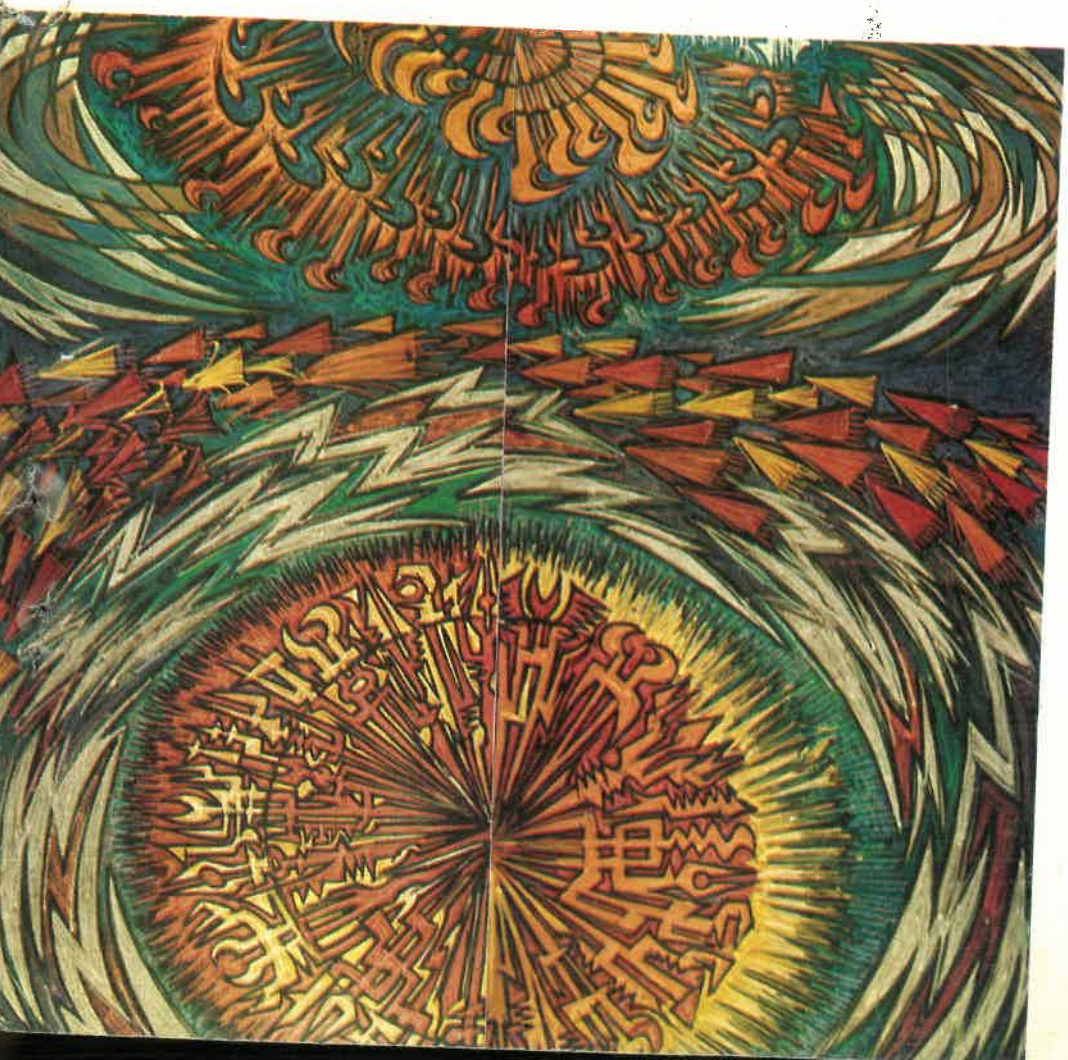
used symbols such as the pen, the book, the wooden writing board and so on, while in the second were used axes and spears and swords and bows and arrows and a skull.

In "Triumph" the same type of drawing was used to represent the forces of life, a bundle of lines, mostly upright, while behind it were Iying prostrate the forces of death. Back of both was shown a huge oval red sun of victory rising, from which arrow-shaped black rays were issuing, ending in Arabic letters.

In his October exhibition, Sadequain displayed about 30 canvases, most of which were based on the design of a playing card. Each painting had a different linear pattern based on the card design. A face above repeated below and a heart or other symbol at top left and bottom right corner and other such features of the card were used in all, while for the rest each "painting" had a different pattern of thick black lines, mostly straight but often criss-crossed and sometimes whorled and in one case circular with radiating lines within each circle.

It was all rather light-hearted and playful and fanciful work with no special feeling or idea or experience to communicate. The November, 1968, exhibition however, was very important, for it included 25 illustrations of the verses of Ghalib done in large oil paintings for the first time ever.

Coming forty years after the publication in 1928 of Chughtai's illustrated edition of Ghalib's verses, called "Muraqqa-e-Chughtai" this was a vastly different interpretation of the verses. In place of the soft, delicate and poetical water colour paintings of Chughtai, Sadequain's oil paintings were dark and sombre, harsh and crude. There was vigour in the quaking black lines and drama in the strong contrasts of light and dark areas. The sparing use of colours, mostly light blue or blue-green against dark brown or dark blue, hardly changed the basic linear character of the work. Most of the themes were tragic and therefore the paintings were aptly dark and dramatic, colourless and sombre. Some were downright ghoulish, with profuse use of skeletons and blood.



Abstract design on ceiling of Sadequain Gallery, Karachi.

With each illustration of Ghalib's verses, Sadequain had appended a small panel on which the relevant verse was calligraphed in Urdu. That gave him the idea to use his hereditary talent in calligraphy to write and paint the verses of the Quran. This is the innovation that he attempted and displayed in the December, 1968, exhibition.

In each canvas Sadequain wrote a few words from a Sura (or chapter of the Quran) and made them into some sort of a design. Then he set this design in a landscape background of trees and mountains or stars and clouds and thus made an object and a presence of those words. Other words from the chapter were written in small letters, as narrow panels or floral borders.

Endless ingenuity was shown in making designs out of the words by elongating lines vertically or horizontally or making out of them arcs or zigzags or whorls or circles or ovals or whatever.

This exhibition heralded the advent of painterly calligraphy in Pakistan and for a decade it was the rage, with many young and old practitioners, creating a variety of work. By now, almost every artist has created some work in this field.

After this the monthly exhibitions came to an end but in May, 1969, when the centenary of Ghalib was being celebrated, Sadequain put up fifty canvases illustrating the verses of Ghalib, including the twentyfive already displayed.

Thereafter till early 1970, he gave himself the diversion of composing 1,500 Rubaiyat or quatrains in Urdu verse and in March-April, 1970, calligraphed and illustrated some hundred of these in black and white. In May, these were published in book form.

The next fifteen years were spent by him largely in practising calligraphy. First, he made paintings of the mellifluous and picturesque chapter of the Quran called "Sura Rahman". The words were written in ingenious designs and set in appropriate scenes, of course with no figures, human or animal. These were displayed in the month of Ramazan (fasts) in the Hijri year 1390, corresponding to November, 1970.

Towards the end of the year, he also painted a large mural on the theme of man's struggle against the hostile forces of Nature. The mural was donated to the Naval Headquarters, Karachi, and was later shifted to the Pakistan embassy in Istanbul.

In February, 1971, he made some large drawings, paintings and calligraphies based on the verses of the poet Faiz to mark his sixtieth birthday.

In July-August he made some 200 pen and ink drawings for the illustrated edition of his Rubaiyat which was published in September, 1971.

In April, 1972, he wrote the magnificent "Sura Yaseen" of the Holy Quran on 260 feet long wooden panels and donated it to the Lahore Museum, where it is still displayed.

From early 1973 to 1984 he lived in Lahore. In the first half of 1973, he completed the splendid ceiling of the central gallery of the Lahore Museum, depicting the starry heavens .

In early 1974, he painted or drew Sura Yaseen on a long panel of translucent plastic sheets, and also made separate such panels of Sura Rahman, which could be easily carried in travel and therefore he called them the airmail editions of his work.

From October to December, 1974, he travelled to eight countries of the Middle East and held solo exhibitions there. In October, November and December, he travelled widely in Romania, the USSR and Turkey and held many exhibitions there., while in January he was in Iran.

In February, 1976, he was back in Lahore and started living in Bagh-e-Jinnah. In May, he put up an exhibition of calligraphies and paintings which included a series called "The Kiss". This aroused violent demonstrations against obscenity.

June to August he painted two large murals, each 56 x 12 feet, illustrating some versés of Iqbal for the Sports Complex of Islamabad. The theme was the struggle of the nations of Asia and Africa for freedom. In October, 1976, he was hospitalised but on the sick bed he calligraphed the 99 names of Allah on square pieces of chipboard which are now on display in the Lahore Museum. In August, 1977, he started making paintings of the verses of Iqbal, These were exhibited in the Lahore Museum in November, 1977 to mark the centenary of the poet's birth.

The whole of 1979 was devoted to calligraphy which culminated in a large calligraphic mural that he went and made in Abu Dhabi.

From November, 1981 to December, 1982 he was in India and during this time made huge murals, first at the Aligarh Muslim University (in copper cutouts) and then calligraphic and figurative murals at the National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad Deccan, and later at the Banaras Hindu University, and finally he executed in very large size the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah (Asma-ul-Husna) in the Indian Institute of Islamic Research at New Delhi.

In 1985, he reverted from calligraphy to painting by making a dozen illustrations of verses of Faiz which were exhibited on the second death anniversary of the poet.

In January, 1986, an exhibition was held of 40 marble slabs on which he had written and painted the Sura Rahman (chapter of the Quran). He gifted these to "the people of Karachi" and they are housed now in the Galerie Sadequain which was set up in Liaquat Hall (former Frere Hall).

"Darkness and Light", part of mural on ceiling of Sadequain Gallery, Karachi.



In early 1986 he began work on the gigantic project of paintings to cover the whole ceiling of the hall of Galerie Sadequain, 140 x 70 feet. and also the cornice bordering the ceiling. This huge mural entitled "Al-ardh-o-was-samawaat" (The Earth and the Heavens) was made up of figurative paintings, decorative designs and some calligraphy. It was to be painted on 100 hardboard panels of 8 x 4 feet but he had barely completed 87 panels (total area 2,784 sq. feet) when he was snatched away by the cruel hands of death on 10 February, 1987. His pupil Anwar accomplished the formidable task of joining, installing and touching up the adjoining edges of the hundred panels on the 40 feet high ceiling, and all round on the cornice. The most impressive is the figurative mural on the north side where he has painted allegories of Light and Darkness on one side and War and Peace on the other, with a lot of symbolism.

To sum up the contribution of Sadequain to Pakistan's art, one can say

1. He initiated the painting of large murals and created some thirty, of which five are in India. Five in Pakistan and one in India are calligraphic and the rest figurative.

2. He initiated painterly calligraphy and set the vogue for it in Pakistan.

3. He was a thematic painter and always painted an idea or a literary subject. He achieved fullest expression of an idea in his "Saga of Labour" mural at Mangla but his last mural "Al-ardh-o-was-samawaat" in Frere Hall, Karachi, was too ambitious a subject and he could not do justice to it.

Painting on ceiling of Entrance Hall of Lahore Museum; wholly abstract except for Adam and Eve in centre (?) and for hands of the Creator (?) on all sides.



4. Because he was a painter of ideas, he never painted a portrait except once (printed on the cover of "Pakistan" Quarterly Vol. XI No. 3)

5. He was a figurative painter.

6. Although his early work shows him capable of doing good figure drawing, for some reason he adopted an almost caricaturist style in which the limbs hang limply and the outlines are wavy, the size exaggerated and the mass ponderous. In his last mural he did not even paint the hands and feet and made them look like flippers.

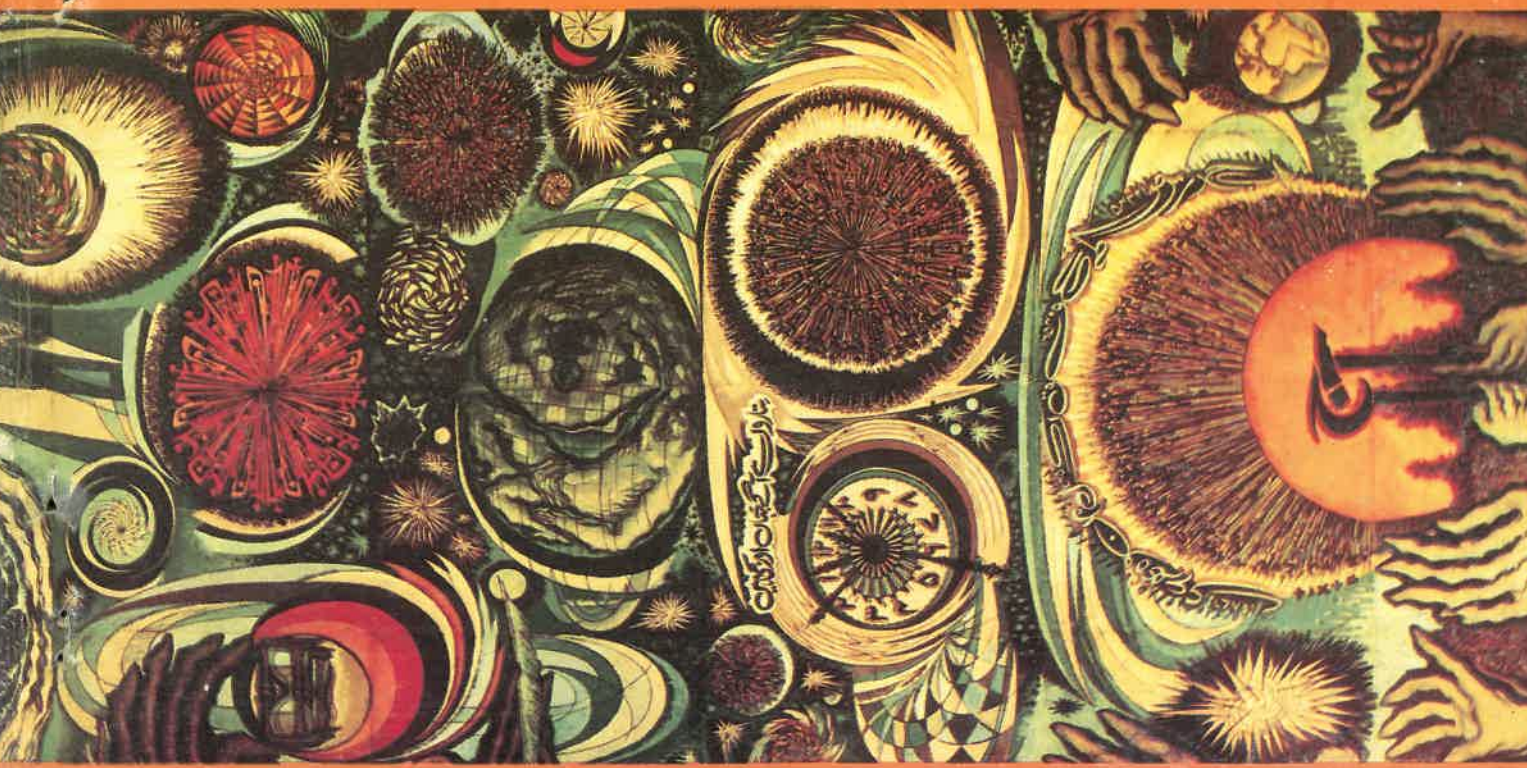
7. He was also a prolific inventor of wholly original abstract designs which he used to decorate his murals. Some of them even suggested things like suns and stars and revolving meteors.

8. His work was basically linear, in the tradition of all Oriental art and this is emphasized by his use of markers as a medium.

9. He was not much of a colourist and most of his work is grey and colourless. However the murals on the ceilings of the Lahore Museum and Frere Hall are brilliantly colourful, though without tonal variations or merging of colours.

10. His work is not derived from any eastern or western source.

11. His output is enormous and endlessly varied.





Zubeida Agha

ZUBEIDA AGHA

Zubeida Agha began her artistic career in the late 40s by making puzzle pictures which naturally aroused much attention by their sheer oddity and novelty.

Her aim was to paint immaterial things and abstract ideas, and so some of her early paintings bore such titles as "The Wind", "Youth","Future", 'Metamorphosis","Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" and the like.

To represent these, she could draw and paint just what she liked. So she made some quite imaginary free forms in thick black line and coloured them flat in neutral or dark colours. In some purely subjective way, the forms represented the given abstract subjects to her.

Besides the rudimentary drawing and colouring of these early works, there is a touch of the comic in some, as in one entitled "Wisdom". This shows a woman's face in profile with a mouse-like shape sitting on her head and also a big egg.

Others had a Surrealistic touch such as "Horses" and "Urban Landscape" in which deserted streets were sought to be shown with a few simply drawn straight lines and the horses with some rough scribbles.

There was quite a furore in the press when she exhibited these early efforts at Karachi in 1949. Scathing criticism by the outraged was opposed by the stout defence of her supporters.

She outgrew these eccentricities, which she had considered "modern art", when she went to London and then to Paris to receive proper education in an art school.

In fact, on her return, the pendulum swung backward and instead of the darkly mysterious pictures, she started painting in a style that was the soul of simplicity—figures drawn in a childlike manner and set in a sylvan setting with fanciful trees and flowers. The whole was painted in light cheerful colours, mostly pastel shades of green, yellow, red and some brown. Such are her paintings of the early 50s, as "Spring", "Tea Garden" and "Village Scene" (last one, in the Art Gallery of the Arts Council, Karachi).



Floral Pattern

The same happy mood and bright colours are found in some other pictures she painted in 1955, such as "Kites" and "Houses with Trees"and one in 1955 entitled "City Lights" showing lighted windows of blocks of houses.

In these three a pattern was made with crisscrossing thick straight lines to produce a vaguely Cubistic effect. The square enclosed areas were filled alternately with light and dark colours. In the case of the houses, rows of dots were made to suggest windows.

This motif, with matchbox houses and here and there triangular gables, was often used by her in the 50s (as in "Houses with Flowers" and "Yellow Flowers") and even later because these crisscrossing straight lines and these angular forms were suggestive of Cubism and modernity.

One more theme of which she was enamoured in her early years was cotton pickers and tea pickers in panoramic view, as long panels. According to Agha Abdul Hamid, her brother, who wrote for forty years about the artist in glowing terms:

"Almost the first picture she painted – 'The Cotton Pickers' – sets out boldly to portray her aims and methods. The colours are vivid and bright yet harmonized successfully. The rigid intellectual discipline has resulted in a simplificalion of drawing and a rejection of unnecessary detail. There is a deliberate but controlled attempt to simplify the structure of the painting and thus achieve a beautifully rhythmic quality."

In simple English, the picture is the earliest elementary attempt by her, as an untraincd artist, and the result can be seen from the picture reproduced below. Fully wrapped up women have been shown in a row, two by two, facing each other. The alternately left-facing and right-facing figures of similar women does set up a rhythm which links them up in a pattern.

So fond was the artist of this subject that after about ten years, she painted in 1954 another long panel showing tea pickers and called it "Tea Garden". The same trick of drawing one figure facing left and one right was followed but in this case a variation was made. Instead of all the figures standing in a row like ducks, they were arranged alternately high and low, in zigzag form. The figures of the women were barely suggested with a few rough lines. The tea garden is represented by a broad band of colour all speckled with little dabs of paint. On the horizon are shown a few trees in shorthand form – one stroke for the trunk and a few short strokes for the branches. The best construction one can put on it is that it is the offhand work of a great master cavalierly dashed off. At least, it is colourful and cheerful.

Very different and very attractive is "Winter Landscape" painted in 1957. It is all colour with a minimum of linework. A few trees have been very lightly and just symbolically indicated here and there, all over the picture space (not as in a continuous landscape) and each tree is enveloped in a cloud of transparent colour, pink and green and yellow. Little white dots show the foliage of the trees. The whole picture is bathed in a yellow mist. Whether the title is apt or not, it is a pleasing picture.

In the 60s, Zubeida Agha moved more and more towards colouristic compositions as against linear. The painting entitled "Poppies", dated 1971, well represents this trend. The area of the picture is all covered unevenly with grey-green that shades off into light and dark and light again, here and there, totally formless. Against this background are painted four large poppies which are just blobs of scarlet paint with black centres. An attractive effect has been brought off with the minimum of means.

Cotton Pickers





Carnival, 1952



Poppies

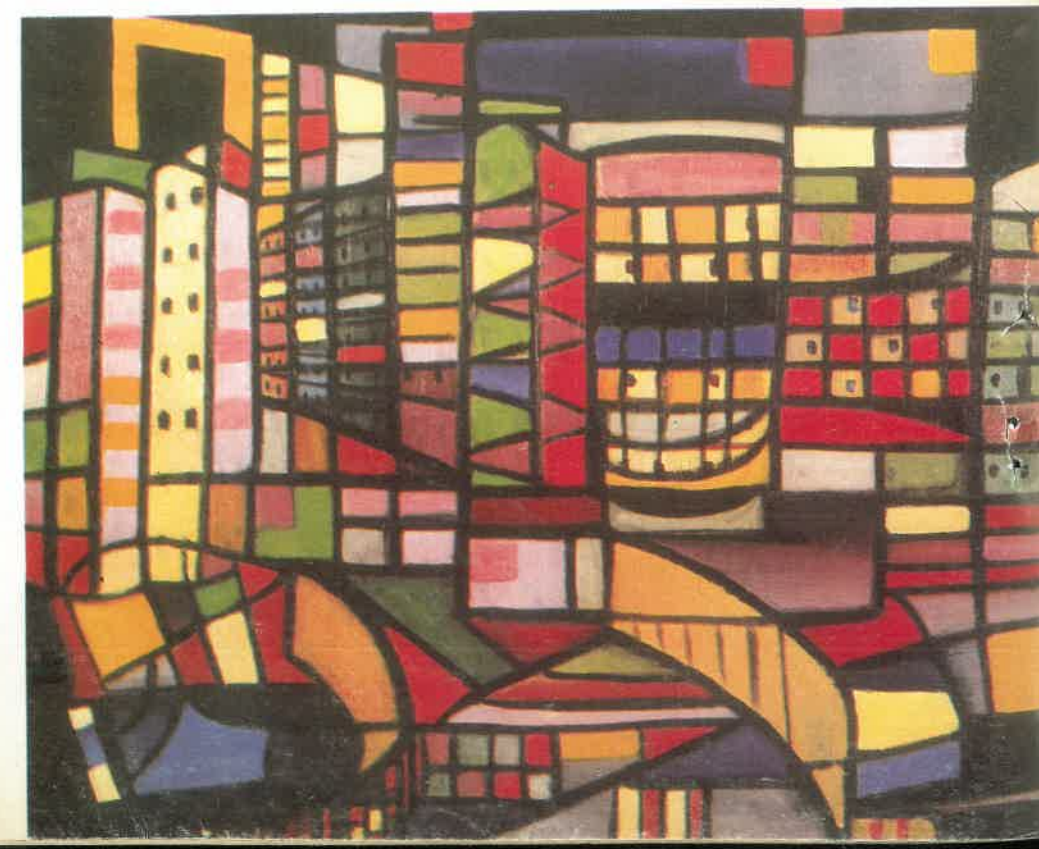
The same wholly colouristic and non-linear approach was followed in "Painting in Blue" (1978), "Midnight" (1979) and "Crystal". They are largely formless and the interest lies in the ebb and flow of blue-green colour, a gleam here and a shadow there, even a streak or a band, an arc or a crescent, all created by changing light or changing tones of the same colour. The imagery is quite unearthly and far from the familiar world. If at all it suggests anything, it is under-water scenes or the night sky.

This series was very painterly in style and subtle, pensive, monochromatic and mysterious in spirit. On the other hand, another series she produced in 1978-79, including "Carnival" and "Composition" (a cluster of bubbles), was bold, joyous and multicoloured. Interestingly enough, she had painted the subject "Carnival" in 1952 also but then she was semi-realistic. Three big flaring fireworks were shown against a night sky and below that a block of buildings with many lighted windows. The 1979 "Carnival" is purely abstract. Against a dark background which is visible at the upper and lower edges of the painting,

ZUBEIDA AGHA

1922	*Born at Faisalabad (old Lyallpur).*
1944	*B.A. from Kinnaird College, Lahore. Worked in B. C. Sanyal's studio at Lahore.*
1946	*Took lessons from Mario Perlingieri.*
1949	*First solo exhibition (at Karachi).*
1950	*Joined St. Martin's School of Art, London.*
1951	*Solo exhibition at Trafford Gallery, London. Joined Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris.*
1952	*Solo exhibition at Galerie Henri Tronche, Paris.*
1953	*Returned to Pakistan. Settled in Karachi.*
1955 & 1960	*Solo exhibitions in Karachi.*
1961-77	*Worked as Director, Contemporary Arts Galleries, Rawalpindi.*
1965	*Awarded President's Medal for Pride of Performance.*
1978	*Solo exhibition at home in Islamabad.*
1983	*Solo exhibition at Rawalpindi. Shakir Ali Award by PNCA.*
1994	*Major exhibition at Islamabad after long gap.*

City Lights



Flowers and Forms



the whole space is covered with roughly brushed in, dark red colour. On that are painted, in bright yellow, blue, green and pink, diverse little shapes like sequins and spangles. It catches much better the spirit of joyous celebration than the semi-realistic picture of 1952.

The 1978 picture entitled "Composition" could just as well be called Bubbles or Balloons because it is made up of a big cluster of multicoloured circles, large and small and also a few free shapes at top and bottom. All these and the colourful ground and the jagged border strips make an attractive composition in form while in spirit it strikes a festive note.

She is at her best in purely abstract work and whenever she attempts to paint any real subject, she fumbles. Such is the case with "Waterfall" (1976) and another painting of about the same time which shows a "Mountain Lake". The depiction of rocks, mountains and water in both is weak.

A beautiful calendar entitled "Painters of Pakistan" was produced by Pakistan Tobacco Co. in 1971. It contained a write up and ten paintings each of one West and one East Pakistani artist, namely Zubeida Agha and Aminul Islam. The anonymous writeup ended by declaring:

"For her, the people, their simple hopes, their sorrows and joys are the greatest reality in life. Her identification with the working class is complete...Zubeida is Pakistan's artist of the people."

Nothing could be farther from the truth and this is obvious from the fact that out of ten paintings reproduced in the calendar, only two show people, namely the oft-mentioned "Cotton Pickers" and one other, entitled "Village Scene", both of which date back to the 40s.

In 1980 and in 1985 the Pakistan National Council of the Arts sent abroad a representative selection of the works of our leading artists, including Zubeida Agha. In both cases, all her paintings were semi-abstract, except one called "Reclining Figure" in which a face barely peeps out of the lower edge of the picture, while all the remaining area was covered with varying tones of red.

In fact, her painting is far removed from the world of people. Once in a while she has painted doll-like children and female figures, mostly in the late 50s, but they are so naively drawn and painted that they look unreal. Her favourite subjects are leaves, flowers, vases,carnival, city lights and also some eerie, far-fetched, subjects like "Iceberg", "Waterfall", "Island", "Sky", "Black Horses", "Black Vase", "Storm" and so on.

She is at her best when she is semi-abstract, using as subject such simple objects as vases or leaves or flowers in utterly rudimentary and imaginary form. She can work up these into delicately balanced, lucidly laid out compositions, light and sparse and airy-fairy.

Her latest work, which is also her most attractive, tends to play with colour and to avoid the line. Rather than drawing, colour is her forte. Avoiding crowded and complex compositions, she creates paintings in which one or two colours ebb and flow in varying tones, congealing here and there into unrecognizable forms and fanciful imagery which anchor the sea of colour playing around them.

A touch of strangeness, and mystery has always been a quality of her work from the earliest to the latest. It is this which lifts up much of her work and imparts to it a special quality.

There is careful planning, conscious artistry and perfect finish in her paintings and it seems she does not let herself go at any time. Abandon and gusto have no place here, nor messy brushwork nor emotional strokes. It is marked by reserve and restraint, refinement and daintiness.

To view her paintings is to be transported into a serene and strange world peopled by unfamiliar imagery and steeped in purest colour.



Blue Flower Vase

Carnival, 1979



SHAKIR ALI



Shakir Ali by Colin David

Shakir Ali emerged on the art scene of Pakistan at a very critical moment, when many of our artists, who are now famous, were just beginning their career, and were groping for a path. He exercised a decisive influence on them because he came with the prestige of having acquired the latest and best art education not only in Delhi and Bombay but in London, Paris and Prague. In 1937, he studied Oriental painting under Sarda Ukil at the Ukil Brothers' Studio in New Delhi. From 1938 to 1944, he studied at the Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay, where the Impressionist painter Charles Gerrard was Principal. During 1944-45, he studied Mural Painting under Gerrard and, as part of this training, had to study the ancient paintings of the Ajanta Caves. In 1945. he was made Fellow of the Sir J. J. School of Art and in that capacity worked and also travelled widely in South India to study the architecture, sculpture and fresco painting of the region. From 1946 to 1949, he studied at the Slade School of Art, London University. In 1949, he went to Paris and worked in the studio of the famous Cubist painter, Andre L'Hote. In 1950, he went to study Textile Designing at the School of Industrial Design, Prague. In 1952, he came to Pakistan and, after a short stay in Karachi, went to Lahore, where he was appointed Head of the Fine Art Department in the Mayo School of Art.

Lahore was the centre of art in Pakistan because here was situated the hundred year old Mayo School of Art and the more recently set up Fine Art Department of the Punjab University. Besides, here lived and worked the two senior artists whose name was well known all over Indo-Pakistan. namely Abdur Rahman Chughtai and Ustad Allahbux.

When Shakir came to Lahore in 1952, a number of talented young artists were beginning their career, namely Parvez, Shemza, Ali Imam, Moyene Najmi, Qutub Sheikh and others. They were not prepared to follow in the footsteps of Chughtai (who had developed an Oriental style similar to the Bengal school started by Abanindranath Tagore) or of Allahbux, who practised a highly romantic kind of realism.

Frolicking Deer



SHAKIR ALI

1916	Born at Rampur (India) Studied in Jamia Millia, Delhi, and Philander's College, Nainital.
1937-38	Studied in Ukil Brothers' Studio, New Delhi.
1938-44	Studied in J.J. School of Art, Bombay.
1946-49	Studied in Slade School of Art, London.
1949-50	Worked in Paris with Andre L'Hote.
1950-51	Studied in School of Industrial Design, Prague.
1952	Joined Mayo School of Art, Lahore, as teacher.
1956	Exhibited in Fine Arts Department of Punjab University.
1961	Became Principal of Mayo School of Art
1967	Awarded President's Medal for Pride of Performance.
1971	Awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz.
1973	Retired from service.
1975 (Jan. 27)	Died in Lahore.



Leda and the Swan

But they were fascinated by the semi-abstract work of Shakir because they thought it was the latest and most modern style brought straight from the great centres of art in the West by an artist who had lived and studied there for long.

Shakir's position as teacher gave him a special opportunity to influence the young artists of Lahore. Moreover, his social and friendly nature brought him in touch with a large section of the cultural world, and his persuasive and sincere manner of talking helped him to bring round the young artists to his manner of thinking. One can only guess what would have been the shape of art in Pakistan if Shakir had not led the young artists to follow in the path of the Post-Impressionist Cezanne or the creators of Cubism, Braque and Picasso. It is quite possible that he should have developed a style based on his studies of the Ajanta frescoes and the Gujrat miniatures or on a synthesis of these with modern Western art. In fact there is some early work of Shakir which is wholly based on our old miniature painting and blown up to the size of easel painting.

But, as a matter of fact, the earliest work that Shakir did in Lahore was mostly semi-abstract in the manner of Braque and Picasso, but especially the former. He painted many Braque-like still lifes such as "Still Life with Apple", "Still Life with a Bottle of Chianti" and "Still Life with Fruit". The first was most characteristic of his style. In this the apple was hardly noticeable while the picture was divided into many areas with straight lines and a few curves and each area differently coloured, to make a bewildering pattern in which the big jug and the apple get lost. In those early days, he was obsessed with the subject of the bull. He made some very complex and puzzling and menacing paintings entitled "The Bull" and "Woman and Bull" and "Europa and the Bull". In the first, thick black lines have been used to delineate the subject. The anatomy of the bull has been all juggled up so that it can hardly be recognized. No doubt, the composition is very tight, firm and compact but the total effect is awesome and deterring. Moreover, it reflects the black mood of the artist. Much more so does the painting "Shadows", which is one of the



Tall Figure in Profile

very rare totally abstract paintings of Shakir Ali. Again, very thick black lines have been used and strange, awesome forms have been depicted with geometric curves and straight lines, making a very depressing picture. More tender emotions are reflected in the very early paintings "Mother and Child" and "The Bride" which show his unsatisfied yearnings in the lonely life he was leading, for his marriage had broken up before he came to Lahore and it was after some years that he married again. But both these paintings are bizarre and bewildering, especially the first. In this, instead of the natural contours of the human figure, Shakir has used harsh geometric straight lines, circles, semicircles and arcs to build up the images. Instead of softly graded tones, there are sharp divisions made with thick black lines and each division coloured almost flat.

Marked Change

The paintings of 1956 and 1957 show a marked change. It seems the economic security and high respect which his new job gave him, and the abundant love and admiration that he received from friends, both male and female, softened and mellowed him. He no longer painted fearsome pictures of the bull nor did he build up his imagery with harsh geometric straight lines, arcs and circles, but used the soft natural contours of the human figure. Only the background was divided into rectangles and other geometric shapes. Paintings of this period include a buxom "Standing Nude" and another generously endowed "Reclining Nude", "Sisters", "Conversation" (showing two seated women with the moon in the background), and "Three Figures and the Moon" (showing two standing and one seated woman), besides many others

No doubt, in all these pictures the abstract design element is dominant but the human figures are naturalistic, though not realistic. In other words, the basic structure of the body is well indicated with very few lines, though there are certain mannerisms, such as making the head small and faceless, and making the legs tapering to a point.

As his work progressed and he gained more confidence, we find that his paintings of the late 50s become more complex and crowded and bigger. Thus, we have his "Composition with Cows" in which a man, many cows, some trees and houses are packed together. The basic structure of the painting is geometrical because within the picture frame are smaller horizontal panels balanced with vertical panels or rather solid forms with straight sides. Breaking the rigidness of these geometrical forms are the naturalistic forms of the cows within the panels. Thus, the geometric and the naturalistic elements are played against each other. Similarly, in another painting entitled "Musicians" dated 1960, the artist has divided the picture area into three large and many other smaller overlapping rectangles and within each of the three bigger rectangles is shown the figure of a musician playing some instrument. The human figures are outlined, as far as possible, in straight lines and sharp angles, in keeping with the geometrical structure of the painting but still there is a play of the geometric against the naturalistic. By shading outside the edges of the overlapping panels, distance is created between them and variations of space are created in the picture. This feeling of space is further strengthened by the deep tonal variations which are very roughly rendered.

In 1961, Shakir became Principal of the National College of Art and soon after he contracted a love marriage with a foreign lady. It is not, however, possible to say that these happy events noticeably brightened his paintings because this change had already come over his work in 1956 and 1957. Anyway, his second marriage did not last long but there is no doubt that his best work was created in the 60s.

There is his largest mural drawing, about ten feet long, entitled "Pastoral" which is in the Shakir Ali Museum at Lahore. It shows four men in the foreground running through a forest and pursuing two deer while a number of birds are flying above. The figure drawing is masterly, showing the basic anatomical structure deftly with the fewest telling lines. The drawing is not quite realistic because there is some stylization and elongation but the earlier Cubist type of angularity has been softened and smoothed out to come nearer to nature. The distribution of empty space and form is apt and balanced in a loose and natural way, without being tight and formal. The whole mural breathes an air of peace and happiness. Another large mural entitled "Flight" was acquired by the Czech government. It shows a line of blue birds, whose open wings are painted yellow because



Girl with Caged Bird

the light is falling on them. They are crossing our path of vision against the sky with great speed and energy from a dark into a lighted area. Though Shakir maintained that he projects no ideas or meanings in his paintings, which are basically forms and colours, yet one cannot help feeling that this painting is a powerful expression of the theme of freedom. This theme of freedom and restraint is again used in a painting of 1968 in which up in the bright half of the picture a flock of birds is flying in freedom, while in the other dark half of the picture three figures are shown (bust only) tightly holding birds in their hands. It is entitled "Figures with Birds".

A similar painting but much bigger and more ambitious, is hanging in the Lahore Museum showing two nude standing figures, a man and a woman. The woman is holding a bird in her hand while another bird is flying in the top left. The background of the painting is very dark blue while the figures are dark red and orange. As always in Shakir's work, the basic structure only of the human body is lightly indicated, with just a little stylization and exaggeration to emphasize the main structural elements, as the hips and shoulders. The colour is rich and deep but it is roughly applied to exploit texture. Although the painting is fully satisfying on the level of form and colour only, it is obvious that the birds have some symbolic meaning for the artist. He has painted this theme so often that it must have had some special significance for him. There are a number of paintings by him showing a man or woman with a caged bird.

In this connection, it is relevant to quote some observations that he made in a talk he gave before a gathering in Lahore in 1966:

"Each one of us is born with a bird, free unfettered, reaching out for the infinite. But owing to the prejudices of our civilization, the restriction of our families and the superimposition of convention, that bird is caged and loses its notes of freedom. I am trying to find that bird in men. And if I do, I will pass it on. That bird will go right from me to you."



A Portrait

In the same talk he said:

"I am not totally abstract. I use objective reality as a point of departure. But these objects are symbols. This is a period of symbolism. Every artist passes through this period and I think I am also passing through this period."

He introduces many symbols in his paintings to impregnate them with meaning. The sun and moon, flowers and birds are most frequently used. The frequently recurring image of a bird in a cage or in flight emotionally projects his deep concern and emotional involvement with man's desire to be free and his fear of losing his freedom in this hostile world.

Similarly, the moon and flowers which shine equally all over the world, symbolize universality for Shakir. He explained this point beautifully in a discussion with some critics and artists which was published by the Urdu monthly "Pakistani Adab" of Karachi in December, 1974:

"We do not react to national and social events and even if we do, our expression is of topical and passing value. For example, during the war, Intezar Hussain wrote that outside bombs were falling and inside his house Shakir Sahib was sitting and painting the moon and flowers. And it is quite true that I had blacked out my studio and was making pictures of the moon and flowers because I strongly believe that flowers bloom both in Pakistan and in India. The moon shines equally on the graves of my ancestors in Rampur and on the graves of the venerable elders who are buried here. Thus, I was reacting to the war but in a different way."

The sun, moon, birds and flowers are also symbols of the love of life for Shakir. This is evident from his remarks about the book "Report from the Gallows" by the Czech writer Fucek who wrote his diary in his last days when he was under sentence of death. Shakir commented: " In this book the love of life and freedom and the nation has reached its very limit. Its writer finds it possible to talk about the sun, moon, flowers and birds in the gravest situation when the terror of death looms before him." Shakir also made use of classical myths as symbols. Thus, he painted "Europa and the Bull" in the late 50s, and "Leda and the Swan" in the early 60s. The latter subject he painted more than once and it reflected his passionate love affair which led to his second marriage in Lahore.

JOY OF LIFE:Men and women, birds and flowers. (22 ft x 4 ft)





Nude ....

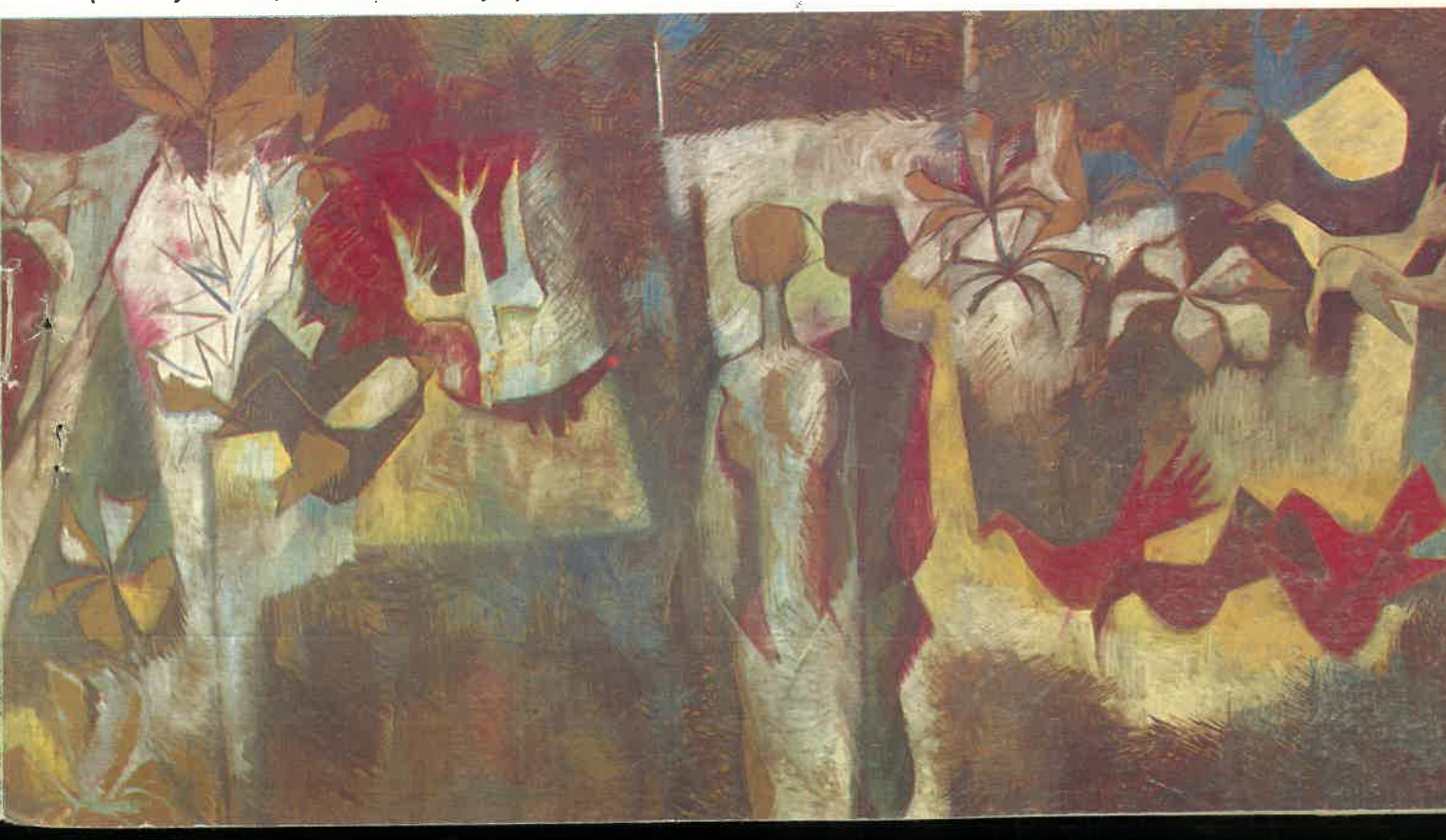
Religious Subjects

Certain religious subjects which had been painted by many European artists for hundreds of years, had acquired deep symbolic significance of a universal nature. Two of these were Madonna and the Child, and Pieta. Shakir painted the former more than once because it expressed his unfulfilled desire for a child.

His painting "Pieta" (dead body of Christ taken down from the cross by the Virgin Mary, although the latter is not shown here) hangs in the Shakir Ali Museum at Lahore. The figure of Christ is painted dark red against a dark blue background. It is very sensitively painted and full of feeling.

There are a number of long and narrow vertical still life paintings in the Shakir Ali Museum which are quite bare and sparse, showing just a jug and two oranges or a bottle and two balls or a bottle and a plant, and so on. All these seem to be just exercises in composing a few simple elements in an odd sized picture area.

(Courtesy of owner, Mr. Roshen Ali Bhimjee.)





A Bottle of Chianti

Only Portrait

There is perhaps only one portrait by him and that shows three quarters face of a young man The head, forehead, cheek and chin is drawn masterfully in one sweeping thick black line. and the same thick black brush strokes are used to depict the jaw, the ear, the eyebrow and nose. The outer eye is shown with a thick black dot while the nearer eye and cheek is smudged blue. Deep blue and red and yellow ochre are applied roughly in big patches and the background likewise is smudged with these colours and black. A tilting frame half encloses the face because only two arms of the rectangle are visible. It is no doubt a richly colourful and very powerful study and one wishes Shakir had painted more pictures of this kind. Possibly, it is a portrait of his friend and eminent art critic Mohammad Hasan Askari, who wrote in Urdu one of the earliest articles on him in the 50s, presaging his greatness.

Another noteworthy and pioneering work that he did in the late 60s was the painting of huge calligraphic murals. In these calligraphy was used for the first time as a motif in painting. He painted three such murals all of which are verses from the Quran. One of these, painted in 1968. is in the Bait-ul-Quran section of the Punjab Public Library. In this the Arabic words (Iqra etc.) are interspersed with flowers and leaves. The second is in PINSTECH (Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology) near Islamabad. In this the verses of the Quran known as Ayat-ul-Kursi have been painted in the form of a triptych as three pages of a book. The third is in a bank in Lahore.

Obviously, Shakir had no command over the age old styles of classical calligraphy and he wrote the Quranic verses in his own style, as a painter rather than as a calligraphist. The deviation from the classical pattern makes it a little strange if not jarring. In proportion to the big size of the letters, the lines are too thin. But there is no doubt that he has been able to weave together the forms of the words into an attractive pattern. Noteworthy is the use of the blank areas, as elements in the painting.

One finds in these calligraphic murals, as in all his paintings, a lightness of touch, elegance and buoyancy. The composition is always sparse and loose, not tight and rigid. The lines are light, airy, spontaneous and sketchy. The colours are rich and deep but rough and smudgy, with a lot of textural appeal. The earlier work is rigidly, firmly and even harshly composed and often framed within many compartments to make it even more tight. Very thick lines, black colour and Cubist type of angularity is found in the earlier work. The later work is more free and soft and naturalistic although the design element is always strong. He had excellent command over drawing of the human figure and to a lesser extent on animal figures of cows and horses. So he could indicate the basic structure with the fewest possible lines, and always exaggerated the main features and slightly elongated the human form. He was an excellent colourist and his colours are deep and rich and fresh because they are roughly applied and left as such, in rough texture. Though his earlier work had Cubist rectangles and angular lines and much abstraction of natural forms, he grew out of this and developed a masterly style of much greater freedom and simplicity and naturalness. Though he has left many masterpieces but his best work was yet to come.

Composition with Horses



MANSUR RAHI



Mansur Rahi

Mansur Rahi is the leading abstractionist painter of Pakistan and his teaching and influence have led to the emergence of a larger number of prominent artists than any other teacher artist. Obviously, his pupils too are abstract or semi-abstract artists.

When he came to Karachi, in 1963, soon after graduating from the Arts College at Dacca, he was still doing water colour painting in a light Impressionist style. The landscapes were more carefree and the portraits more careful, because the latter demanded more correctness of detail but both had that easy spontaneity and casualness combined with sureness of hand which is the charm of the water colour medium.

Worth mentioning is the fact that even in this early work there were seeds and signs of his future development as a Cubist artist. Though not in the landscapes, at least in his portraits one could see clearly his strong awareness of the structural aspect of the subject which was thrown into relief by light and shade. From the beginning, he emphasised light more than colour, form more than tones.

Going beyond the naturalistic rendering of the subject, he began in 1966-67 to give greater emphasis to the compositional structure of the subject on the canvas and the solidity of the forms and figures. The limpid pools or the cascades of colour, which are so attractive in Impressionist work, began to give way to sharp and clear contours and a carefully controlled plan. There was more feeling for form and space and a distinctly marked design quality.

During this period he began to paint thematic pictures for murals, such as "Birth of a Genius", "The Call of the Soul", "The Soul is Greater than the Body", "Quest for Light" and so on.

Unfortunately, all the work of this period is lost because it was given to a great "patron" to exhibit at his residence in the hope of selling them, a few months before his marriage, but he never got them back.

From 1969, his style changed, though it was evolving in the same direction. The heavy thematic content, the philosophical ideas and the tragic feelings were greatly reduced though they did not quite vanish from his work because they were a part of his mental makeup. However, the emphasis now was on emulating the stylistic achievements of the Cubists. It was the earlier work of Picasso and Braque, which is often called Analytical Cubism, that attracted him first.

Wild Cat



MANSUR RAHI

1939	Born at Maldah (West Bengal, India).
1947	Migrated to Pakistan (Dacca).
1962	Graduated in Fine Art from Government College of Arts and Crafts, Dacca, first class first.
1963	Came over to Karachi. Taught art classes in Arts Council.
1965	Joined Karachi School of Art as Principal.
1966-69	Held seven solo exhibitions and executed twelve murals.
1968	Married co-owner of Karachi School of Art, Hajra Zuberi, artist.
1980	First Prize in Painting in National Exhibition.
1983	Worked as Associate Professor in Fine Art Department of Peshawar University.
1985	Silver Jubilee of his creative career celebrated by holding an exhibition of his paintings in National Gallery, Islamabad.
1986	Visit to Paris.
1987	Visit to Germany.
1988	Given Shakir Ali Award by the Pakistan National Council of Art. Visited Bangladesh.



Refugees

He drew and painted the figures with anatomical accuracy but the leading lines of each area were picked out and emphasised by being rendered geometrically and not realistically. Some lines were elongated and extended to bring out their full force or to help in creating a design. Some were turned into swinging arcs, firm circles, squares and triangles to render approximately the particular natural shape. In this way, the basic character of the form was analysed and brought out more forcefully than it could be in a naturalistic rendering.

Other mannerisms and tricks of Cubism also were used, such as bending out and spreading the hidden side of an image, like the second eye in a profile. Similarly, objects behind another object were made visible by making them transparent, while adjacent areas were made to overlap by extending the leading lines of one into the other.

However, a comparison of the Cubist work of Western artists will show that Rahi's work was different. The calligraphic use of a thick black line was one distinct feature. Often the whole picture was rendered in smooth curves and arcs. Usually, these curves were bulging out, but sometimes he made the outline with arcs curving in or a series of loops whose tips stood out like sharp arrows and gave a very jagged and spiky look to the form. This deprived the figure of all sensuous charm and left it as an intellectual creation. But this manner was used only when the artist wanted to evoke negative feelings of awe or fear or anger as in his gigantic figure entitled "Revolution".

Then he developed certain mannerisms to give his figures a massive and monumental quality. Thus, he made the head small to make the body big by comparison. The hands and feet also were made outsize. One foot at least was shown frontally jutting forward and the hands were often shown clenched to emphasise the idea of force. The shoulders were shown very broad, the calves bulging out. The geometrical approach was followed by using rectangles for the eyes, squares for the pupils and tapering cylinders for the nose.

In the case of Picasso, the monumental phase was different from and followed the Cubist phase but Mansur Rahi combined the two. Moreover, with Picasso this was a passing phase and his interest was mainly in emphasising volume and stressing ponderousness but with Rahi it was a fairly long-lasting phase because it seemed to answer some deep-seated urge. There was frank admiration for gigantic and heroic figures, for massive arms and bulging thighs and calves. At the same time, it was an expression of his deep humanism and his way of exalting the common human being, whether he is a wandering musician ("Musician") or a group of labourers ("Joy of Labour"). At other times, it was simply a mannerism, with magnified hands and feet and minimized head.

Figure in monumental style



The most noteworthy achievement of this phase is a work entitled "Peace", dated 1969. It shows a man, woman and child. The figures have been subjected to analysis and the limbs reduced to geometrical shapes bounded by straight lines or curves. The background is treated in the manner of Synthetic Cubism, in which flat areas, as if cut out of paper, are placed alongside or overlapping each other.

There is balance in the painting created by the placement of the man on one side, the woman on the other and the child in the centre. There is a rhythmic movement pervading the painting from one end to the other, especially the downward, sideways, downward, diagonal and again sideways movement of the neck, the shoulder, the arm, the fold of the dress from knee downward angularly, and finally the foot. A thick line is used to emphasise the basic sweep and thrust of the design and particularly the rhythmic element which is so important in Rahi's work.

This kind of painting may be basically derived from a Western source but the Pakistani painter has made it something authentically his own.

Free Forms

These heroic labours in which gigantic figures were drawn according to set formulae with meticulous care and in which some idea or message had to be put across forcefully, must have been exhausting. It was largely colourless because rendered mostly in sepia

monochrome and it was in deadly earnest. There was need for some unwinding and release of tension.

From 1972 to 1974, he threw the subject overboard and let free forms issue from his brush expressing nothing but the mood of the moment. These were curvaceous, wavy, roundish forms which did not verge on doodling because they were not limp but taut and springy and they did not have the harshness of the strident thick black outlines of the gigantic figures.

The severe monochrome too was replaced by varied and cheerful colours within a restricted range, for Rahi's work is never too brightly colourful. There are always dark shadows behind bright colours.

The colour application became more free and impressionistic in place of the studiously and evenly graded applications in the earlier figure paintings.

There was altogether a feeling of release and liberation and joy as against the serious and sombre and emotionally worked up style of the earlier period.

Though it seems that this aimless freedom was not in keeping with Rahi's nature, he certainly produced a few admirable paintings in this style also. The dreamlike wraiths of light and colour or the flower-like arcs and circles seem to turn and twist on his canvas rhythmically. They are enveloped in dark clouds and iridescent mist and create a strangely suggestive world in which the imagination wanders and wallows with pleasure. It has psychedelic overtones that speak of another world beyond the rational.



Wild Horse

Rolling Colourful Mists



Rhythm in Line and Colour



Tiring of such unrestricted freedom, Rahi introduced a subject in every painting but it was most cunningly concealed, challenging the acutest observer to discover it. Such are his paintings of 1975 entitled "Mother and Child", "Wild Horse" and "Composition with Seated Figure".

The same wavy curving lines remain in these paintings as in the earlier pure abstract work and the colours too undulate and flow without hard boundaries but there is a nominal subject like a puzzle in the painting.

The charm of the work however has nothing to do with the subject. It lies in the rhythmically flowing lines and the half-enclosed forms they describe and their balanced relation to each other. Even more important are the patches and blobs of colour that have usually a very light background over which these dark hues emerge. They are only partly bounded by the linear forms and usually have one defined side while the other fades out. There is some clever juggling of coloured areas in which they partly overlap and grow dark in those parts. Luminous effects over darker areas as on a crystal globe in darkness or misty clouds of colour and many other devices are used to create colour fantasies and strange harmonies whose only justification is their right placement in relation to each other, that is compositional correctness.

Tangible Forms

After indulging in these puzzle pictures with wavy lines and roundish forms and free flowing colours, in 1975, 1976 and 1977, he came down to more tangible and solid forms and clearly outlined lucid compositions.

Misty Curvaceous Figure



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Misty Curvaceous Figure



In this new series, the elements were straight-sided geometrical areas but with rounded corners and softened contours. He divided the picture space into a few large squares or rectangles, some overlapping and some small within large. These are all mostly painted each in different shades of light brown or yellowish or greenish brown, and are given a misty luminous look. Within this luminous mist are suspended a few dark squares and rectangles, all two dimensional, as if cut out of tinted glass. Where they overlap, their light-brown or amber colour darkens. Within the squares or rectangles are other such, painted lighter or darker but in the same colour range of yellow and amber.

Many other straight-sided and also some curved forms were created by him and variously painted but all were suspended in a luminous space, a pearly white background. (See picture on right).

Though the forms were all flat and two-dimensional, they were ranged one behind the other, suggesting depth of space and third dimension.

The diffused luminosity that pervades the picture illumines the flat forms that exist in the space.

Around 1990 Rahi moved on from this non-objective to an objective and even a thematic style. He not only used the forms of men and things but expressed his feelings and deep concern at some of the problems (Refugees, Hunger) and even the impending horror faced by humanity (the nuclear holocaust) and the general brutalization and bestiality that has overtaken mankind.

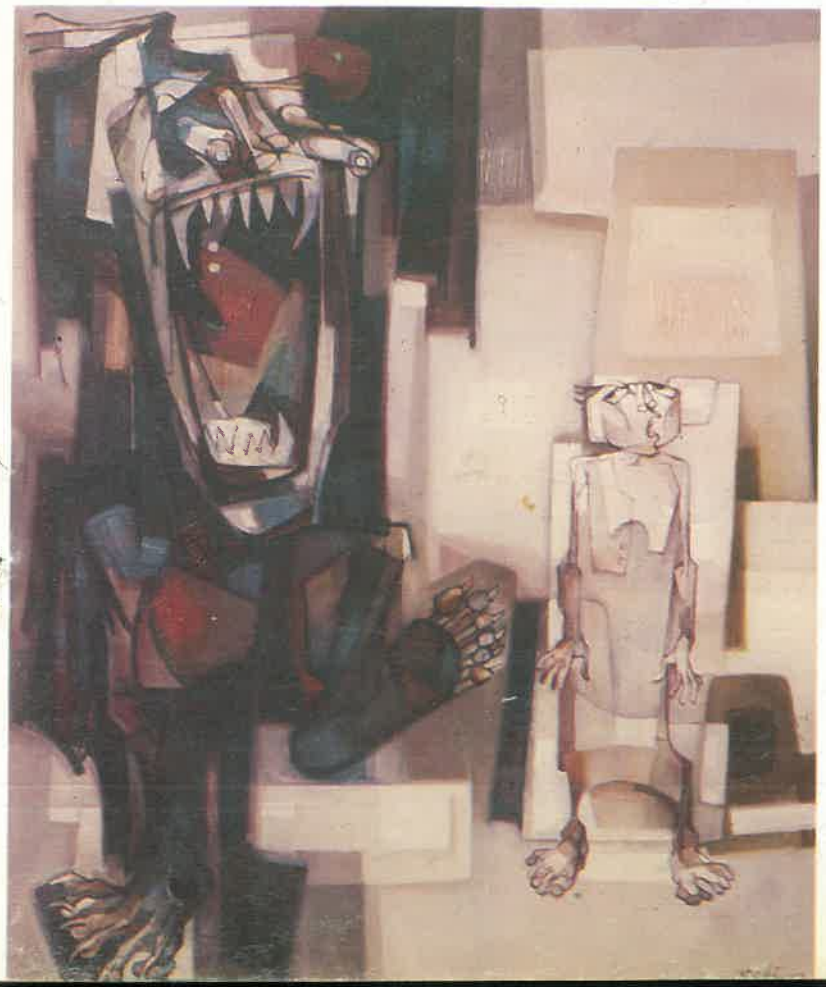
These took the form of paintings entitled "Wild Cat", "Wild Horse", " Monster and Child", and many more.

All these subject pictures are rendered in a unique abstract style that is wholly original and links up with his previous non-objective series.



Plaques in luminous mist

Monster and Boy



MEHR AFROZ



Mehr Afroz

Mehr Afroz had been exhibiting her prints in group shows and national exhibitions soon after she graduated in 1970 but her first solo exhibition of paintings and some etchings was held in 1987 at Karachi.

Figurative Work

It was a major departure, for the whole exhibition comprised figurative paintings. She emerged as a painter of merit and a painter of feeling and deep human sympathy, very different from those earlier dark, detached and dumb prints that have not a word to say about the human estate.

The theme of these sixteen paintings was masks and puppets, for she saw humanity masquerading in masks and behaving unnaturally like puppets.

It was a good peg on which to hang her geometrical designs, which was her main interest. The round or oval faces and the straight-sided limbs and bodies fitted easily into her plan of the picture. A more realistic drawing of the faces and figures might have looked discordant. In any case, realistic drawing is out of favour with the connoisseurs and done in the small size in which the paintings had been executed, would have looked perilously like old-fashioned miniatures.

The artist claimed to be depicting the grotesqueness and weirdness and even hideousness of the masks that people go about wearing and the puppet-like manner in which they behave with their stiff and stilted ways.

The stiff and rigid attitudes were well reflected in the straight-limbed figures of the puppets but the faces were by no means horrid though they were made to look a little strange by their slanting eyes. Otherwise, they had a sweet doll-like look, with their round or oval faces and outsize large eyes.

It was doubtful if she was able to put across her allegorical theme about people wearing masks and behaving like puppets but certainly she succeeded in conjuring up the lost world of puppets that we knew as children.

Another of the ideas expressed in some of the paintings and prints was the helpless captivity of women in Pakistani society, though the menfolk will question this assumption. This idea came through quite clearly in one very successful blue painting in which vertical bars had been painted around the figure of a woman, suggesting that she was looking out of a cage.

Secret of Appeal

Obviously, it is not the idea but the way it is rendered in paint which contains the secret of the appeal of a painting.

The abstract values that characterized her previous work were very much in evidence in these figurative paintings too.

First of all, the figures and faces were simple and almost geometrical and fitted easily into the geometrical design.

Secondly, there was the same previous emphasis on a strong structure or plan of the painting. This was ensured by a number of borders and by dividing the enclosed space into rectangles, some as narrow as strips or bands.

Her favourite zigzag pattern was used in the border and when it passed over the heads of the puppets, it created the form of a crown, turning the puppets into kings and queens.

MEHR AFROZ

1948	*Born at Lucknow (India).*
1966	*Passed Art Masters' Training Course from Lucknow Government Art College.*
1971	*Graduated in Fine Arts from Government College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow.*
1973-90	*Senior Lecturer in Central Institute of Arts, Karachi.*
1974	*First solo exhibition of prints in Karachi*
1976 & 1980	*First Prize in Graphics in National Art Exhibition.*
1987	*First solo exhibition of paintings (Karachi).*
1990	*Second solo exhibition of paintings (Karachi).*

Third and most noteworthy was the sudden upsurge of colour in her paintings. Previously, her prints were mostly in dark and neutral colours. In fact, the flow of colour washed away many of the area divisions and softened the rigidity of the design. Instead of the transition being from hard-edged area to hard-edged area, the picture spreads out in colour washes that are soft-edged. Colour fades into colour and tone into tone. A good example of the free colouristic approach was a picture in which two women in orange dress were shown standing against a green background where the variation and undulation of the colour is bound by no line-wise or area-wise design. However, even here the zigzag pattern has been used in the border and the two figures themselves are no better than two long rectangles.

Fourth and most important was the heavy emphasis on texture, as always in her prints. Hardly anywhere was there smooth application of colour. The grain of the paper was exploited in applying acrylic paint thin. In almost all paintings, there was a ground of texture produced by painting lightly over some thin gauze fabric or wire netting and the rest of the painting was done on this ground. The texture is visible wherever the overpainting is light and thin.

Enigmatic



Crowned Head



Fifthly, the artist used colour on colour, as in her prints also. This is done by painting the thick-grained paper and then wiping it off lightly so that the colour remains in the cavities but is removed from the raised surface. Then a second related colour is applied on the top surface, like green over yellow or red over purple or whatever. Thus a fine multicoloured effect is produced and one colour glimmers below the other. This kind of colouring has a very rich and saturated look.

Finally, it must be noted that wherever line work is required, as in the faces and figures, the drawing is firm and strong, and wherever colouring is undertaken, each colour remains clear and fresh and is deftly and skilfully run into the next colour. There is no muddiness or murkiness even in the dark colours. They retain their clarity and freshness.

Her second painting exhibition was held in January, 1990 at Karachi, actually the first wholly comprising paintings. While her previous exhibition had a theme, namely masks and puppets which made the primitive simplicity and oddness plausible for a reason, the second had none. They were just faces in which poetic licence or artistic liberty reached far beyond the limits of masks and puppets. Whereas previously she rendered the face and the features and body clearly, though stiffly now she took to the use of bare tokens and symbols to indicate the features. Some of the faces were barely suggested with a few colour marks in a bigger colour design, and some were rigidly outlined with the oddest grimaces and distortions Some glimmer of a certain character or personality no doubt came through. Her own assessment, as given in a published interview, was "In my new series of portraits, I have continued my appreciation of primitive imagery as a metaphor for the sub-conscious....Through my textures and colours, I have tried to convey mystery and atmosphere." No doubt her work is highly suggestive and evocative, where "more is meant than meets the eye". Then the firm composition and layered colour application adds to the appeal and bespeaks both technical skill and a sensitive mind.

Distraught Face



Look of Dismay



NAHID



Nahid

Nahid had been painting for almost a decade when she hit upon the idea of using the form and the carvings of the Chawkhandi Tombs These tombs are situated twenty miles out of Karachi, in the midst of nowhere. Each is a pyramid of solid rectangular blocks of diminishing sizes in three or four tiers. All the stone surface is covered with exquisite carving which has been described as lacelike for the delicacy of the design and the minuteness of the workmanship.

The action of strong winds in this sandy waste has eroded the surface of the stone in varying degree and the weather has imparted to the yellow sandstone an attractive patina.

Nahid has not attempted to paint the carvings on the carved tombs realistically for that would have been a daunting enterprise and would have involved no creative contribution of the artist.

She therefore decided to approach the carvings impressionistically, barely suggesting the design with a touch or two and then trying to catch the half-faded and half-eroded surface in heightened colour. The tombs do acquire a strange beauty in the sunset glow and the imagination of the artist can play other lights and colours on the fantastic surface to create ever new effects.

Thus, some of Nahid's paintings of Chawkhandi have a dominant pink colour scheme, others orange and still others purple and so on.

The Chawkhandi theme is a play of colour and the eroded surface is an excuse for variations of colour and texture. A glimpse of the actual carved designs, here and there, confirms the authenticity of the so-called Chawkhandi paintings.

The Technique

She worked on paper with mixed media, using water colour, oil pastels and chalky pastels. Most often, the main design is very sketchily drawn and then oil pastels are rubbed lengthwise on the paper which has been placed on an uneven stone surface. Thus patchy and dappled effects are created on the rough paper.

Then water colour of an appropriate matching shade is applied over the treated surface. It seeps into the crevices and the areas where no greasy pastel has been applied and is repelled from the treated parts. Thus, dots and patches of two related colours, or even three, like yellow, pink and orange, or pink, blue and purple, cover the surface and a very plausible effect of texture is created, as in eroded stone, under play of coloured light. Afterwards, more linework and shading is done with chalky pastel to fill the design and to heighten the random effects created in the slapdash manner described above.

Chawkhandi Tombs motifs. (Four of this series acquired by Bradford Museum)



NAHID RAZA

1949 Born at Delhi.
1967-70 Earned diploma in Fine Art from Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi.
1969 Best entry in annual exhibition of Arts Council, Karachi.
1970 Obtained B.A. degree from Karachi University.
1981 Second prize in Painting in National Art Exhibition, Islamabad.
1987,'88,'89 Visited Germany and held exhibitions there.
1992 Set up own art school, Studio Art.

The Universe Series

In 1985, Nahid went to the United States and returned after a stay of six months during which she learned the technique of monoprint and etching at Michigan University in Detroit. On her return she held a major exhibition of her monoprints at Karachi and also put up some black and white etchings and one large acrylic painting.

The theme of all the work was "The Universe", according to the artist, but this did not strike the viewer very forcefully and the pictures appeared to be just abstract forms and colours. Nahid has a good sense of design and skill in handling colour. Therefore, she can create attractive abstract paintings, as she did for many years, using the motif of the Chawkhandi Tombs in a very free and impressionistic manner and the oppressed women theme in recent years. But painting the Universe was a tall order and perhaps she attacked a theme that was too formidable. She strove to think up some meaningful symbols and images of the Universe but all she could come up with was the circle, the half circle and the crescent to represent the sun and moon.



(On right, top) Fleeting Glimpse of Life Behind Doors: the Fallen Women

(On right, below) Many Compartments of Women's Life

(Below) Harmonious Setting of Traditional House



Repeated use of circles and crescents becomes monotonous. Even these circles and crescents were clumsily drawn, perhaps because she had to draw on some hard surface to make these monoprints. The large circles in particular, were drawn very falteringly and crookedly. The result was even worse when the circle and crescent were drawn in reverse by leaving these forms blank in the midst of a painted area. The outline was then made firm by drawing but usually it was rather awkwardly done.

Oppressed Women

It seems that by 1989, Nahid was beginning to feel the need to make her paintings more meaningful and relevant to the times and its problems. Perhaps she felt, like the other abstract artists, that some content was necessary to make their paintings worthwhile. Suddenly, we find signs of social awareness in Nahid. The captions of the paintings she exhibited in November, 1989, show that she was deeply exercised by the sad state of the women of Pakistan. One was entitled "Woman Not a Sunflower", another "Women Symbol of Strength", and yet another "No More Torture". Unfortunately, with all her good intentions, the meaning did not come through. In fact, if the captions were not there, no one would have any inkling of what the artist was driving at. Even with the captions, a commentary was necessary to understand the imagery.

The faces and figures of women are no more than scribbles while the rendering of her ideas of women's suffering and women's high status is feeble. For example, to glorify motherhood, a foetus is shown in the womb. To show their "imprisoned" existence, a number of women are shown, each in one compartment. (See page 132, bottom.) The quality of drawing can be seen from the two pictures below. These are early ones in her women series. The level improves in later work. (See page 134 bottom.) Her faces and figures are better if they are not linear but tonal and colouristic, as top picture on page 134.

She is more successful when she does not draw too many faces and figures together, which are often too small and too crude to be recognized. One figure boldly drawn in her painting "The Dance of Freedom" well expresses her idea through a woman dancing and her large scarf and skirt whirling in rhythmic curves.

The real charm of Nahid's paintings lies in her design and in her colour, over both of which she has excellent command.

She often divides the painting into compartments to give it a firm structure. For example in "Our Child", there is one large circle above in which is shown a couple, and there is a small circle below with a foetus inside, and on either side are upright branches. simply as a design element. She has many other devices and also uses architectural motifs, such as pillars and arches to frame the figures.

Enough!





(On left)

Mother's Children in Protecting Hands. (Early attempt on theme of women - 1989)



Mother and Daughter

Nahid's triumph, however, is as a colourist. She has developed a technique of her own in which colour is applied on colour in many layers, rough and grainy, so that the lower colour gleams through the pores of the upper. Because always a reddish tonality is dominant, the colour seems to smoulder like red hot embers mixed with ashes.

The painting at top left is a good example. The space division is interesting and the composition is dominated by the central panel with a semi-circular arch within which is a tall female figure holding close to her a smaller figure, perhaps her daughter. There are panels on either side and oblongs below which have still more vaguely suggested figures or objects. But the whole is held together firmly by the design and the pervading deep dark red colour, darkening into bluish or greenish tones or brightening into orange, thus creating a very attractive variegated effect.

The painting below is an example of her latest work (1995) which series is called by her "Life on Chess" or chess-board. It is an attempt to turn into painting a literary phrase that woman is a pawn on the chess-board of life. All our artists have this literary bias which is in the centuries old tradition of our miniature painting. However, this compartmentalization is in Nahid's established style and bright images emerging out of a dark background is typical of her. The colouring, for a change, is lighter and softer but the immense variety has been well controlled into a total satisfying harmony.

Flying in the face of these features of Nahid's work, a foreign critic wrote in "Dawn" (10.1.'95) that she "has freed herself from the gravitational pull of ordered composition that weigns down the bookish work of Mehr Afroz". The rigid compartments and the use of arches, doors and windows and niches in which to set figures and faces shows that the composition is only too well ordered, whatever the contents may be.



Many roles of Woman

AHMED PARVEZ



Ahmed Parvez

Ahmed Parvez was one of the most remarkable artists produced by Pakistan and the only one who received such widespread acclaim abroad, in England.

No one has created such ingenious and intricate abstract compositions with lively and exciting linework and no one has used such glowing colours in variegated harmonies as Parvez.

From his first solo exhibition in 1952 to his last in 1979, he passed through many phases as a painter but during all these years his work was marked by bursting nervous energy that expressed itself in vigorous drawing made up of short strokes and sharp turns and twists of the line. This is true whether the line is straight or curved. It moves in short bursts, angular patterns, staccato rhythms, never languidly or lazily flowing in long sinuous rhythms.

Though his work is prismatically colourful, it is basically linear because he conceived the picture and drew it in line, often thick black line, and then filled it with colour. The different areas are filled with single colour which is almost flat or slightly shaded and varied.

His lines are all curves and arcs and ellipses while straight lines are sparingly used. In certain moods, these curves turn into a series of angular lines in a rugged manner under Cubist influence but mostly they are smooth curves, though short clipt and terse strokes.

Some of his linear motifs are like Islamic arabesque made up of long hooks, loops, curls, elongated shapes and tear shapes but in Parvez they are not languid but always bursting with an energy that is very modern and Western in character.

Earliest Work

The earliest work of Parvez, from 1952 to '55, when he left for London, was figurative and markedly Expressionist, because the figures that he drew even then in thick black outline, were exaggerated or distorted or highly dramatized with deep, dark sombre colours. The captions of some of these pictures suggest their deeply emotional character: "Despair", "Man of Sorrows", "Woman with Apple" (or Eve), and so on.

In all these, the drawing and colouring is simple, bold, emphatic and almost primitive in its roughness and crudeness. The face is often distorted with a grimace and is filled with bizarre colours to achieve emotional stress and expressiveness. The influence of Picasso was obvious in some of this work.

On the other hand, his many still life paintings of those days are in the manner of Braque. Thus, in the same picture the objects would be shown as if seen from many angles. The body of a vase was drawn as if seen at eye level while the mouth was seen from higher up. The outline too would be distorted, as if under tremendous pressure.

Although he gave up painting still life in the style of Braque very early, the distorted vase continues to feature in his paintings right to the end.

Work in London

After he went to London in 1955, he gave up his figurative work and turned abstract, perhaps feeling that this was the done thing in the modern West. For four years he continued to produce hard-edged compositions made up of squares, triangles and straight lines but this work could make no impact in the art world of London. Luckily, he accepted the adverse critism of Denis Bowen, Director of the New Vision Gallery, and gave up the linear approach for the tonal, the angular geometrical shapes for the curvilinear and the hardedged line for the roughly brushed in contours that fade and darken and fade again into the liquid shot colour background.

Man-Objective Painters



Still Life

Miniatures

It was in London too that he started making small paintings in water colour and gouache because he could not afford oil paints and canvas. Somehow this clicked With his temperament and he filled the small space densely with a variety of small abstract shapes made up of little curves and lines and dots and dashes.

English art critics were fascinated by these miniature paintings and wrote highly complimentary reviews. Roderic Knowles contrasted the crudeness of his large oil paintings with the delicacy of his small gouache miniatures.

"The images of his oils are dramatically and sometimes crudely presented. They have something of the surge, the oppressive struggle and erupting cruelty of existence. But the world of his miniatures is a unique one of visual poetic utterances that have the exquisiteness of small jewels, a delicacy and dynamcy which lead one subtly into a world of contemplation."

The Guardian also wrote in the same vein while reviewing some exhibition of these miniatures held in London:

"The mood is as near to Klee as it is to the jewelled ambience of an Eastern potentate."

The Arts Review again compared his work to jewels:

"One cannot but marvel at those in particular which radiate a jewel-like splendour and vibrate by the very tenderness of their delineation".

While inventing the alphabet of the abstract language with which he built up his compositions, he picked up some symbols and imagery from the British artist Alan Davie. These included the Y, the horseshoe and the kidney shape and especially the long thin strips like curving ladders with small compartments made by intersecting lines, which were shown winding here and there.

Parvez made no secret of this and publicly acknowledged his debt by naming his exhibition of 1968 at "The Gallery" in Karachi as "Homage to Alan Davie".

But any one who compares the work of Davie with that of Parvez will notice that there is slow deliberation in the drawing of Davie and his images lie still and stationary. On the other hand, in the most characteristic work, the drawing of Parvez is swift and impulsive and rhythmic. His images seem to erupt and explode and scatter around.

However, no doubt, there are a series of paintings by Parvez in which this explosive quality is lacking and he piles up slowly and deliberately and awkwardly-drawn images. These are the paintings in which the ubiquitous short arc and short V and Y shapes and kidney shapes are used, as also the curving ladder shape.

Return to Pakistan

None of these features occurred in the first few exhibitions that he held in Pakistan after his return from London in 1964. These were the Karachi Arts Council exhibition of 1965 and the exhibitions at the studio he set up in Taj Hotel on Kutchery Road in Karachi.

In this completely abstract work the images were repeatedly and heavily brushed in so that the edges faded into the background. It was marked by frenetic brushwork and swift short gestures which always created taut and springy arcs, curves, loops, ellipses, circles, whorls and meanders. A double convex arc would add up vaguely into an eye or a leaf shape, while one curve within another, joined taperingly at one end and rounded at the other would make the paisley design (or kairi, in Urdu).

The feverishly and rhythmically churned up imagery and background gave the impression of a maelstrom. This impression was emphasised by showing bits and pieces flying apart. All these dense and crowded features were firmly held together and balanced in all kinds of novel and innovative compositions.

AHMED PARVEZ

1926	*Born at Rawalpindi. Educated at St. Joseph's College, Baramula, Kashmir, and Gordon College, Rawalpindi.*
1952	*First solo exhibition (in Fine Arts Department of Punjab University).*
1955-64	*Lived in London.*
1965	*In Pakistan.*
1966-69	*Lived in New York*
1978	*President's Medal for Pride of Performance.*
1979 (Oct. 5)	*Died in Karachi.*

Another series in the same style was less abstract because it made use of the sun or the sunflower as the central motif and played around it with the same rhythmic gestural strokes. The round form of the sun or sunflower at the top was varied in many ways and the leaves below too were transformed at will with brush strokes that are sometimes smooth and sometimes angular and rugged but always forceful and animated.

In yet another series that he painted in Karachi towards the end of 1965, he created rather sparsely spread out designs with swinging curves that looked like twigs branching out to left and right at many angles and sprouting leaves here and there. Some of these were smoothly curved in eye shapes or leaf shapes and some were angular in diamond shapes. One could almost see the brush of the artist move to left and right in wild yet rhythmic gestures, creating all sorts of curves and also angles where the curves meet. The outer ends of these strokes fade out into the background. Sometimes a revolving orb is shown at the top, created by repeated circular strokes of the brush in many related colours and sometimes swiftly drawn arcs suggest circular motion.

After Return From New York

In 1967 he went to New York in pursuit of the Japanese-American Reiko, whom he married. His work must have impressed the art circles because he was able to hold a one-man show at the prestigious Gallery International, on Madison Avenue. The marital relationship did not last long and he was forced to leave the USA and return to Pakistan in 1969.

In 1970 and in the next couple of years he was painting snake-like or octopus-like forms of varying thickness, waving and undulating and writhing upward and sideways. The colours were gay as ever in Parvez but the weird reptile forms may suggest the toils

Medley of Forms and Colours





Interlocking curves and loops

of womanly wiles in which he had been caught, as a helpless victim, in New York, and then flung aside, for he was literally driven out of New York by his Japanese-American wife. Never before or after did he use this particular imagery in his paintings.

1973

The next peak of his career was in the year 1973 when he married for the third time, now his own cousin, M. Bakhshi, in Lahore. In this year, he started painting in a new style which was minutely ornate and colourfully joyous. Its highly wrought details had a restful rhythm that was not hectic and feverish.

Though one would like to relate the joyous and colourful spirit of these miniature paintings with his marriage but it does not work out neatly in that way. The marriage took place in August, 1973 and broke up in violence within three months. The exhibitions of this work were held in February, 1973, at Rawalpindi and again in December 1973, at Karachi. About the first exhibition one can say that the new romantic relationship he had developed was reflected in his work but the second exhibition followed soon after the personal tragedy and could hardly be called a reflection of his personal feelings. Perhaps the newly discovered style was a vein of rich ore that the artist felt he could work still further and so he continued, despite his personal experiences.

These miniature paintings were done in gouache and filled densely with small and large abstract forms outlined in black and filled with diverse colours.

The main design in each was made by a few sweeping curves which provided the framework of the picture. The nooks and corners were filled with small circles, ovals, crescents, ladder shapes, tear drop shapes and many free forms of all imaginable shapes, always enclosed in black outline and filled with some single colour.

The whole work gave the impression of highly wrought jewellery. It lacked the explosiveness of some of his other work in which forms were not slowly and crudely outlined in black as here, but brushed in, freely. However, even in this series he sometimes shows small elements flying and scattering at the top—small squares, triangle, ovals, circles and many other shapes.

1974-1977

From 1974 to 1977, he continued a variation of this style in which tubular forms of varying thickness were bunched together. These shapes were rough Cs and Vs and Ss and Ys and hooks and curls and of course, the Alan Davie type curving ladder shape. These forms were in double line, as if made of tubes or strips.

The difference between this and the 1973 style was that tubular forms were used to build up almost the entire design and, secondly, the bunched up design was shown always as a nosegay set in a flower vase, usually a jug with a handle. The form of the jug was often distorted and the mouth tilted up towards the viewer in the manner of Braque.

Carpet-like design



In keeping with the idea of the nosegay, he made a little concession to popular taste and introduced flower forms that were actually the same thin tubes radiating from a round centre in varying numbers.

The outlining of these tubular forms was not done swiftly, dashingly and rhythmically but with a heavy hand, slowly and almost crudely. It had none of the swinging arcs and gyrating circles and erupting lines of the 1964 and 1965 style.

1978

After experimenting in a variety of styles, it seems that Parvez settled for a rather simple way of turning out paintings in large numbers. He had already started using oil crayons as a cheap and easy substitute for oil paints. The basic motif of his paintings too was simplified and he began using more and more of the leaf form. These were mostly made as short broad bands that tapered off to a point. In many cases they even had a stub end. Though the leaves were mostly straight-sided and very rough-edged, many had one

or more angular bends. There was no logic or naturalness in the arrangement of the "leaves" but the jumble always fitted into a compact design. They were just an excuse to paint a jigsaw pattern of intense colours. These leaf forms were knit together and loosely bunched in a balanced way, and when each was brightly and differently coloured, they made a brave show, slightly rough and crude but powerful. The background was always divided into two halves and the foreground was in one colour. These large areas of deep bright colour had a great impact.

This was a much simpler motif and composition than the jewel-like creations of 1973-74 but it seems he was in a hurry to turn out as many small paintings as he could, which he could sell fast and cheap. He had at last won the coveted award called "Pride of Performance" which brought him a medal, a citation and a prize money of Rs. 10,000. With this, he immediately fulfilled his ambition of setting up a home by renting a flat in Karachi. The deep preoccupation with the furnishing of his home is commemorated in a fine painting of a chair made up of rough sticks that look like firewood. These have been locked together in some impossible way to look like a chair. Suddenly, he had an overpowering urge to go to Sri Lanka, and hold an exhibition there, which made him sell his household goods and rush out. However, some bitter experience there made him retrace his steps within six days, a thoroughly disgusted and ruined man.

Decline and Death

His work of 1979 shows a marked weakening of his hand. Even in 1978 he had been producing paintings that showed marked decline, a drying up of inspiration and enfeeblement of skill.

He did produce a few attractive paintings in 1979, shortly before his death and in these the same old thick and broad forms were used that suggest leaves, petals, twigs and stems. The background is divided into large areas and painted in different hues. Each area is monochrome and almost flat, with the slightest tonal treatment. The jigsaw of bright intense colours has a powerful impact.

But the forms used are often no more than daubs and doodles made with a very thick crayon and thrown into some sort of a loose harmony, while the background is the same division of two or three large areas filled each with one bright colour. The artistry ot drawing and the vigour of line and the richness of invention and ingenuity in the creation of forms is lacking even in the best. It is obvious that heavy indulgence in drugs had taken its toll and enfeebled the hand and the mind of the artist.





Gulgee

GULGEE

Gulgee is one of the most versatile artists of Pakistan. He is a portrait painter par excellence, an abstract painter of the first order, a calligraphist painter and a moulder of calligraphy into free standing sculpture, a worker in stone mosaic, and an artificer of a variety of art work in metal, including the gigantic crescents that top the lofty minarets and central structure of the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.

He has received no training in art, being a civil engineer by profession. Till 1990, he had held no exhibition of his work in Pakistan or anywhere else, except one or two private shows and a major one at Kabul in 1957, and yet his fame spans three continents and huge murals by him adorn public buildings in the UK, USA, Saudi Arabia amd elsewhere.

Portraiture

He gave solid proof of his talent in portraiture when King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan came on an official visit to Pakistan in 1957. The Government of Pakistan commissioned Gulgee to paint a portrait of the king to give as a present and Gulgee did this so well that he was invited by the King to visit Kabul and paint portraits of the royal family.

Photographs of these paintings show that he was able to achieve a high degree of technical excellence in them. Of course, they were all official portraits of the king and princes and princesses and other high dignitaries, so they had to be painted in their most attractive and impressive aspects, with great dignity and flattering highlights, but apart from this idealization, they were well executed.

After this he had no difficulty in getting official commissions to paint kings and presidents who visited Pakistan. In 1964 he made a sketch of the Chinese Premier, Chou En Lai, and in 1965 painted portraits of the King and Queen of Iran, which again won him an invitation to the Iranian capital to paint more portraits of the royal family.

Needless to say, he also painted the portrait of the leader of his community, Prince Karim Aga Khan, in 1961, and also of Begum Aga Khan soon after she married the prince.

The portrait of the benevolent dictator President Ayub Khan (1958-69) which he painted in 1967 was the last important portrait that he did from life, before turning wholly to portraiture in stone mosaic and calligraphic sculpture and abstract painting.

Naturally, in all the above mentioned formal official portraits the main purpose is to show the subject in the most attractive light and this is not the primary object of portrait painting. A painter working freely tries to catch the peculiarities of the physiognomy of the model, even if he has to exaggerate it a little, to capture the distinctive character of the sitter, with all the strong and weak points writ large on his face.

Rendering a Quranic verse through Action Painting



Gulgee has never had the chance to show his skill in this respect because he has only done commissioned portraits of the high and mighty. Or, if he has painted a little prince or princess, he has naturally tried to idealize it and heighten its charm with colour and light and smooth slick treatment. He has never painted common men and women just for pleasure and for self-expression.

Mosaic Portraits

Gulgee is perhaps a world pioneer in "painting" portraits in stone. Faces and figures of men and women are common in Byzantine mosaic murals but they are rough and crude portraits, created more as elements in an overall design than as attempts to capture the peculiar look and character of an individual. Subtle or fine effects were hardly possible because readymade square pieces of glazed china called tesserae, were used. Gulgee was perhaps the first ever to try and catch in coloured stone the various tones and shades, facets and planes, expression and feeling on the face of a person.

Again, it was in offering homage to a king that he developed the art of making portraits in stone mosaic. It was during his stay at Kabul in 1957 that he happened to visit a factory where tiles, table tops, lampstands and other objects were made of the beautiful coloured onyx marble that is produced in Afghanistan. The idea occurred to him to make a portrait of the king by using stones of different colour.

It must have been a laborious job, especially as it was the first venture in the field. Bits and pieces of the appropriate colour had to be picked out to match each small area of colour in a painted portrait. But it seems the result was successful and satisfied the king.

The second mosaic picture he made was of camels which was presented by the Afghan King to President Eisenhower when the latter visited Kabul in December, 1959.

Encouraged, he made portraits of H. H. Aga Khan III, Prince Karim Aga Khan, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and others. In 1974, he was commissioned by a Saudi prince to make a portrait of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz on which Gulgee spent six months and US$ 20,000 in the form of lapis lazuli but unfortunately the king was assassinated before the portrait could be completed.

His latest important work in this medium was a portrait of President Reagan which was presented to him by President Ziaul Haq at Washington.

It is really amazing how the artist can render in different shades of lapis lazuli all the changing tones of light and shade on the face without creating any hard edges and making the transitions smooth and soft. Of course, it goes without saying, that the features are correctly shown and the likeness is perfect.

When all is said and done, these are masterpieces of craftsmanship in which creation or interpretation or self-expression are not attempted but only a correct duplication of the features and the play of light in a realistic way. A portrait painted in oil in this manner will not be rated very high as art though it will be considered very competent straightforward portraiture. Others also are making mosaic portraits now.

Abstract Painting

Since these portraits in oil and lapis lazuli are commissioned work which is completed and handed over to the client, the public hardly ever gets to see them except in photographs. One or two paintings by Gulgee that are sometimes seen hanging in private galleries or in group exhibitions are in the form of abstract work.

The basic idea of this style was picked up by Gulgee from an American artist who came to Karachi in 1960 and held an impressive exhibition of her work. She practised Action Painting in the manner of Jackson Pollock, daubing and flinging and splashing paint on huge canvases in a dramatic vigorous style which was well expressive of a certain aspect of American character.

GULGEE

1926	*Born at Peshawar.*
1945	*B. Sc. (Eng.) Aligarh University.*
1947	*M.S. (Hydraulics), Columbia University.*
1948	*M.S. (Soil Mechanics), Harvard University.*
1950	*Design Engineer in Stockholm.*
1953	*Dy. Director in Central Engineering Authority, Government of Pakistan.*
1957	*Painted portrait of King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan, in Karachi. King invited him to Kabul.*
1959	*Exhibition at Kabul*
1965	*Painted Queen of Iran and princes and princesses.*
1968	*Made sketches of dignitaries and functions during tour of President Ayub in France, Romania and Turkey.*
1969	*Made sketches of President Nixon's tour of Pakistan.*
1970	*Awarded Medal for Pride of Performance.*
1979	*Made portrait of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz in lapis lazuli (mosaic work). Has been concentrating on mosaic portraits.*
1982	*Awarded "Sitara-e-Imtiaz" medal.*
1988	*"Quaid-e-Azam Award" at First Art Biennale of Pakistan '87. Exhibition in Karachi.*
1993	*Joint exhibition with sculptor son Amin in Washington D.C.*
1993	*Joint exhibition at Karachi with Amin*
1994	*Joint exhibition at Islamabad with Amin*
1995	*Awarded "Hilal-i-Imtiaz" by Pakistan Government.*

Colourful gestural strokes





The Radiant Orb

Gulgee was fascinated by the work and spoke and wrote in adulation of it. He was able to start painting in the same style with remarkable facility and is still doing so.

However, certain differences have crept in, some unconsciously and some consciously. The former element appears in the replacement of daubing colour on canvas by linear strokes mainly and here comes out the difference of temperament and inherited instincts of the Oriental painter as against the Occidental. The splashes and spatters of the American artist gradually became calligraphic strokes in the work of the Pakistani artist. Loops and arcs and hooks and short terse meanders and long sweeps of the brush, vertical and horizontal replaced the broad massive daubs and splashes and smears of paint that the Americans practised in their exuberance.

Then, he used far brighter and more appealing colours and especially more yellow, orange and red than the more sober and even sombre colours of the American artist.

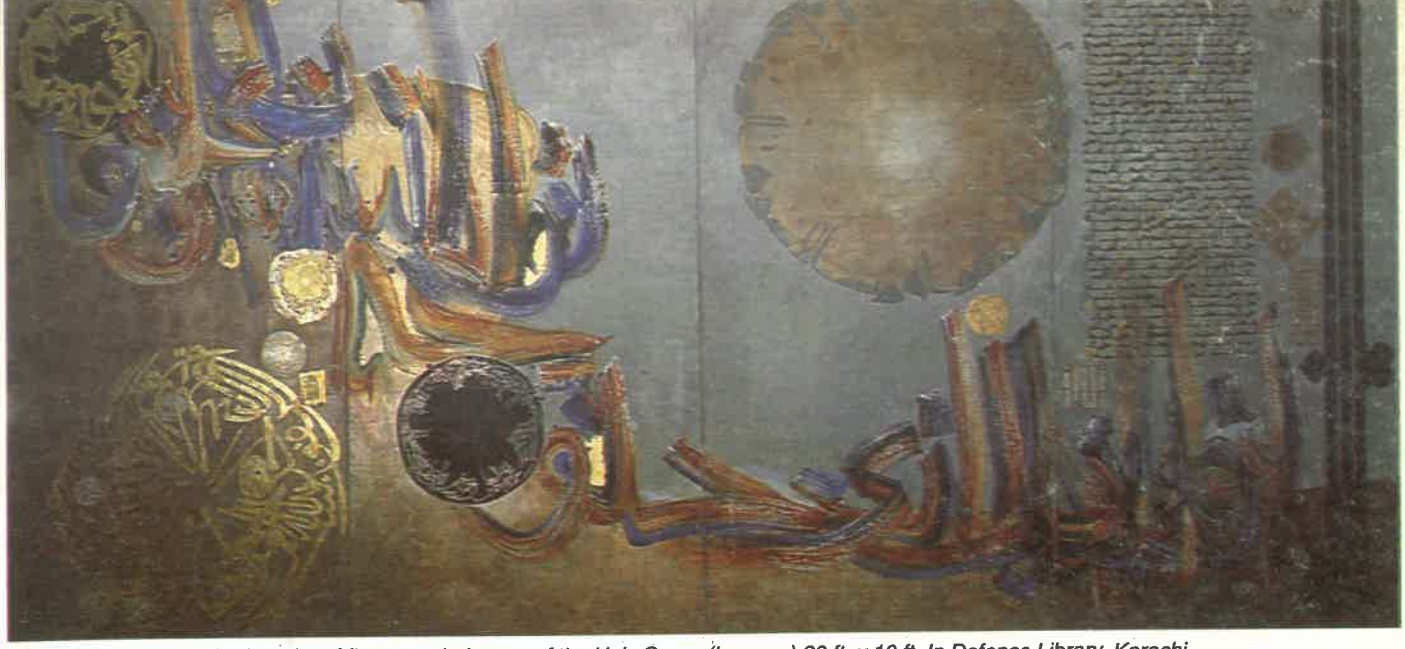
On top of that, he seemed to slow the tempo of the agitated picture by using carefully placed square patches, large and small, and covering some of them with gold leaf, in a very obvious attempt to create Oriental opulence.

Later, he developed this element by making the whole painting with numerous small dots and patches in bright red and blue and yellow and green, to create the impression of scattered jewels. Some of these were covered with silver and gold leaf.

The best example of this abstract work, in which he replaced the furious gestural style with gentle daubs and placid placement of paint in a gorgeous bejewelled style was the octagonal painting of eight foot diametre that he made for the Pakistan stall at Expo '70 of Tokyo. Some more hexagonal and octagonal paintings were made by Gulgee in this style.

However, he did not pursue this style and reverted to the gestural manner of Action Painting except that he began to introduce consciously strokes in the Chinese manner and large empty spaces in the middle or side of the canvas, as in Chinesc paintings. Of course, Chinese calligraphy is in black while Gulgee's calligraphic painting is in colour. In fact, he has developed a technique of multicoloured strokes in which he loads a very broad brush with two or three or four colours and with each application leaves multicoloured streaks on the canvas.

An even more interesting development was the use of this gestural style for writing Arabic words, especially verses or words of the Holy Quran. At least a couple of large panels were made in this manner and it was amazing to see how he could render almost correctly the classical forms of the Naskh style of Arabic calligraphy in this furiously agitated gestural style. This was the most effective modification and use that he made of the derivative style whose basis he had picked up from the Americans.



Calligraphy of first revealed verse of the Holy Quran (Iqra - - -) 20 ft. x 10 ft. In Defence Library, Karachi.

Calligraphy

A word may be said about the astonishing command of (Naskh) Arabic calligraphy which Gulgee suddenly developed in the 70s when "painterly calligraphy" became the rage in Pakistan, largely as a result of the influence of Sadequain. But Sadequain always wrote in black or made the words white by painting around them in black. Other artists started using calligraphy as a motif for paintings in a stylized form, often taking great liberties with the classical forms of words. Gulgee could write freehand in the exact classical style and also modify it artistically to make it part of a painting, as in the splendid painting he made for the Islamic Summit held at Lahore in 1974. In this painting large spaces in the centre are left vacant, but coloured, while in a sweeping semicircular arc is written the famous verse of the Quran: Wa' tasimoo bi hablillah i jamiah wa laa tafarraqu" (Hold fast to the rope of God together and do not fall into dissentions.)

Earlier, he had given proof of his ability to write in the exact classical form when he made a round copper shield of six feet diameter for Expo '70 of Tokyo. It was adorned with calligraphic inscriptions in the form of a round medallion in the centre and a circular panel all round. Doubts that this was got done by Gulgee by professional calligraphers are easily dispelled by Gulgee when he executes superb Arabic calligraphic inscriptions blindfolded. A demonstration of speed was given by him on a huge six foot disc of hardboard which was fixed on a wall so as to revolve and to allow the artist to write all around it. A Quranic verse was written while it was being recited at the inaugural ceremony of Aga Khan Hospital and College.

A playful sally of brush strokes.





Qudsia Nisar

QUDSIA NISAR

Qudsia Nisar is a leading water colourist of the country and the only one doing abstract painting in this medium since 1970. Only in 1991 Ghalib Baqar came up with. quite different and original abstract paintings in water colour but there is always the suggesttion of a landscape in his work.

Much of the charm of her work lies in the handling of the medium itself. Because she is not trying to depict any natural or even geometrical form, she is free to indulge in broad washes or swift strokes of colour, daubs or dashes, just for the beauty of the colour effects so created.

Thus, with a loaded brush, she may paint a large patch, making the colour vary in tone as she proceeds and making it dissolve and fade at one end. She may well leave small areas white here and there.

That was in broad washes, which are usually in light colour and provide the ground of her paintings.

Then, she may swipe a broad band of colour with the brush until the brush scrapes dry on the paper, leaving thin streaks made by the hair.

Or on a broad wash, while still wet, she may paint little loops or wiggles with the tip of the brush, using a darker colour, which then seeps around and acquires a soft fuzzy edge.

These and many other colour effects give pleasure by themselves and Qudsia uses the whole repertoire of the tricks of the trade.

But obviously, such random brush play does not produce a work of art until the various strokes and streaks and patches of colour fall into some sort of unity and coherence. That is where play ends and art begins. The commonest device is to suggest vaguely a landscape, with a dark base and a light upper area; thick horizontal strokes below and light curved hook strokes above.

Or, a very broad band of very light or very dark colour right across the picture will provide a frame on which to hang the rest of the brushwork.

In one case, an actual frame was painted within the border of the picture, with two very thick black horizontal lines or bands and a vertical blue band on the left and much lighter vertical band, almost white, on the right. What stronger framework can one demand? All around and within it are roughly brushed in areas and also zigzag lines and many doodles.

In one painting, she has tried to depict the stream of time by making whitish curved bands sweep from the base of the picture to the top, while a series of horizontal bands divide the whole picture, signifying eras or divisions of time.

In many of her paintings she has painted a dark area all around, fading into a light or even white area in the centre.

These and many other devices help to hold the picture together and impart unity.

In a few paintings, in which the artist seems to have become bored or exhausted, the colour effects are strewn and scattered, without any coherence or overall design or framework.

QUDSIA NISAR

1948 (Feb.)	Born at Karachi.
1969	Master's degree in Fine Art (with gold medal) from Punjab University.
1968-71	Lecturer in Fine Arts Department of Punjab University
1973	First solo show (at American Center, Karachi)
1978 to 1992	Senior Lecturer in Central Institute of Art, Karachi.
1980	First Prize in water colour in National Art Exhibition.
1982	Solo exhibitions in London, Japan, Washington D.C.
1986	Solo exhibitions in Germany and France.
1988	II Centavrodoro IV Quatriennial Prize from Accademia Italia
1992	to date Principal, Central Institute of Arts & Crafts, Karachi.

Abstract forms with stray alphabets



Characteristics

Qudsia's work is not violently impulsive and there are no whiplash strokes but it is markedly free and playfully spontaneous.

There is a feeling of gaiety and lighthearted play and cheerful bustle. This does not apply to her Black Series, which are sombre but they too have an element of fantasy. They remain lyrical and bubbling with animation and emotion.

As with the feeling, so with the style in which it is rendered, there is a feathery lightness of touch. Large patches of light colour are brushed in with a flurry of brush strokes, to provide the background. The main painting is made up of linear strokes or linear images, for the lines are the images and that is the content of her painting.

The strokes may be very thick or very fine but they are light and glancing. There is plenty of doodling and scribbling, which she says, comes directly from her subconscious.

There is a whole alphabet of doodling that she uses at pleasure, such as zigzags, meanders, loops. whorls, crosses, star shapes, circles, ovals, arrows, question marks, dots and spatters and letters of English and Urdu, or word-like markings or hieroglyphs.

Favourite Devices

The use of graffiti is one of her favourite devices, especially in the later series which will be discussed below. Sometimes it has a literal or symbolic meaning and sometimes it is used only for the design quality.

Then there is her fondness for thick broad strokes in the reverse, that is, blank strokes in the middle of the painting.

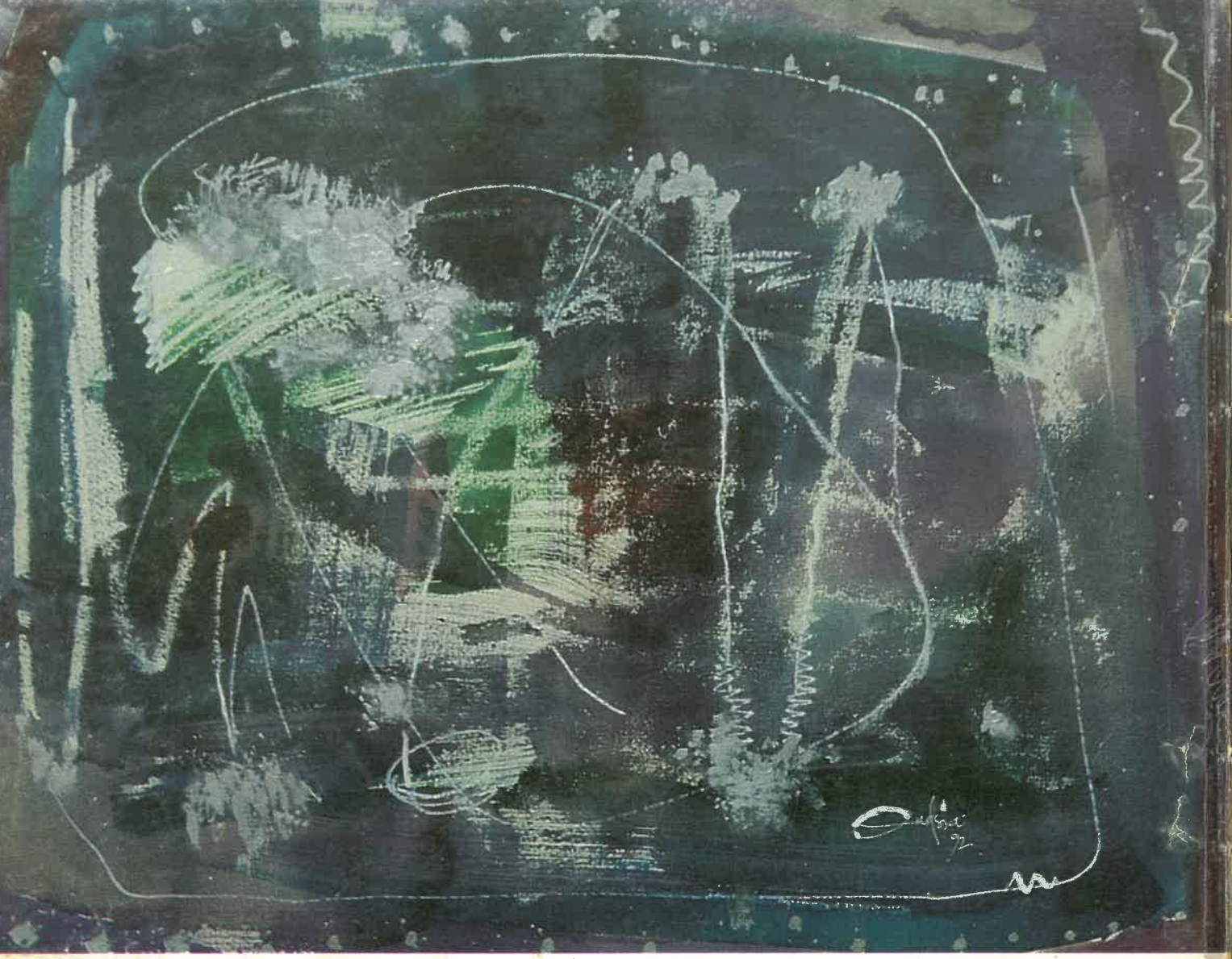
These are made with the brush, using masking fluid on the white paper or after it has been treated with a light wash. Then the artist works freely over the whole paper and over these earlier markings too. Later, when the dried masking fluid is removed, a blank area appears in the midst of the painting. Sometimes this is again lightly painted. The white strokes are also occasionally overpainted on the picture in poster colour. Both ways, the white or reverse strokes have become a prominent feature of her work.

Themes

After having painted scores of such abstract paintings and won wide appreciation, she realized, like the thoughtful person she is, that there is an element of blankness and



Composition with abstract and plant forms



Whimsical lines on colourful ground

vacuity in such abstractions. She felt the need to express her deepest experiences through her work. To give meaning to the dumb forms, she thought up a theme and the first one was The Voyage of Life series. She has remarked:

"I feel I am travelling through the sea of life, sometimes smooth, sometimes rough.... but there is something more than just the visible. The invisible world has its own mystery. It cannot be seen but has to be felt. I have tried to capture it in colour."

There are no figurative elements in these paintings except in the form of childlike graffiti of images and letters. There are also question marks and crosses to emphasize problems and dead ends, and marks of exclamation to signify wonder.

The passage of time is sought to be indicated, now smooth, now rough, by means of appropriate colour effects. Mostly, feelings of pleasure were expressed in this series.

Echo Series

In 1986, Qudsia was invited to Germany to hold exhibitions in three cities. While in Germany, Qudsia was overwhelmed by the music she heard there in concerts and operas. Some music was even improvised by the young musicians of the Pakistan-German Forum. She realized the power of sound as never before and tried to depict it in her paintings, some of which have slight suggestions of the stage and the concert halls.

But she thought of sound apart from music too and realized that even a drop of water falling in a pool creates ripples of sound and likewise the end of the world will come from the final crack of doom, the sound of which will shake and topple mountains and all human structures.

Naturally, there is more movement and bustle in this series than in any other. There are long strokes and profuse use of gold and silver for emphasis.

Sometimes Qudsia is able to articulate her feelings in paint powerfully and at other times she fumbles for words or rather for colours and symbols that can body forth her innermost experiences. It is obvious however that she is desperately trying to communicate and is not simply making blank and mute abstractions "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.".

All Eyes



Festival





A. J. Shemza

SHEMZA

Anwar Jalal Shemza, who lived for almost thirty years in England and died there in early 1985, is the unusual example of an artist who lived in the heart of the Western world and yet managed to keep its influence out of his work, except where this influence itself had its source in the East, as the work of Paul Klee, a major formative force in the work of Shemza.

Early Phase

Although Shemza obtained his diploma in art from the Mayo School of Art, Lahore, in 1947, it was not until 1953 that he held his first solo exhibition.

He seems to have been more absorbed with literature than with art in those days. It was an extremely productive period for Urdu literature and Lahore, his home town, was crowded with poets and men of letters. Shemza wrote several plays and published seven novels.

His painting in those days was very raw and immature but even then it had something unusual and arresting. For example, one of those early paintings, of which he was quite proud, was a vertical panel entitled "Jatti" (a Jat rustic woman). It was painted in bright yellow and yellow ochre and burnt sienna. The figure was more or less realistic, but the face was distorted in what the youthful artist perhaps thought was the most modern Western style, the Picasso manner.

Ahmed Parvez had done something of the same sort in those days in his painting called "Eve" but Parvez knew how to structure his forms very firmly and solidly which Shemza never could, because from the beginning he thought and worked in terms of line and not of planes or facets.

Shaping Out in England

In 1956 Shemza went to London on a British Council scholarship and graduated from the Slade School of Art in three years.

While in Pakistan, Shemza had been trying to be as Western in his paintings as he could, according to his understanding of Western art, but when he started living in England, his Pakistani identity asserted itself as a natural reaction against the danger of getting swamped by his environment and also as the best way to gain attention.

Under the circumstances, it was essential that the style developed should be strange enough to be arresting and yet familiar enough to be intelligible. He made his choice and it could not have been entirely the result of cool calculation; it must have been something in his blood that directed his hand towards some sort of calligraphic expression.

It may be mentioned that carpet making was his ancestoral business and therefore the creation of ingenious intertwining linear designs was native to him.

Dining Table.



SHEMZA

1928	*Born at Simla*
1947	*Graduated from Mayo School of Art, Lahore.*
1956	*Went to London to study art and stayed on.*
1959	*Graduated from Slade School of Art, London. First solo exhibition in London (at New Vision Gallery).*
1985	*Died in London*

Formal classical calligraphy was not a part of his training and, in any case, it would have been wasted on the modern art circles of London, except for the scholars and Orientalists.

The calligraphy had to be presented in the garb of painting by simply using the curves and arcs and sweeping strokes that make up Arabic calligraphy, without actually writing any word. That was enough to impart the strange exotic touch and also provide the occasion and excuse for ingenious curving cavorting linework.

To make it familiar and understandable, it had to be approximated to the style of some of the work of famous Western artists who were using Oriental calligraphy in look only and not in meaning, in form and not in content. Such were the Dutchman Piet Mondrian, the American Mark Tobey and above all the Swiss, Paul Klee, who was Shemza's idol.

Therefore, we find Shemza beginning his "conquest of England" with a display of calligraphic patterns of uneven lines drawn with a brush and made up of a series of arcs and dots and short linear strokes.

It was part "calligraphy", within quotes, and part arabesque, the name we use for those meandering linear designs of Islamic art that occur on carpets, on buildings, on fabrics, on book bindings and elsewhere.

The Western touch was the free-wheeling whimsicality, the Tachist casualness, and the Surrealist queerness of the hieroglyphs.

Development of Style

Very soon he reduced the rough brushwork to precise sharp lines and invented his favourite B patterns (semicircle and double semicircle, upright or flat). These were woven together in endless permutations and combinations, often suggesting male and female anatomies.

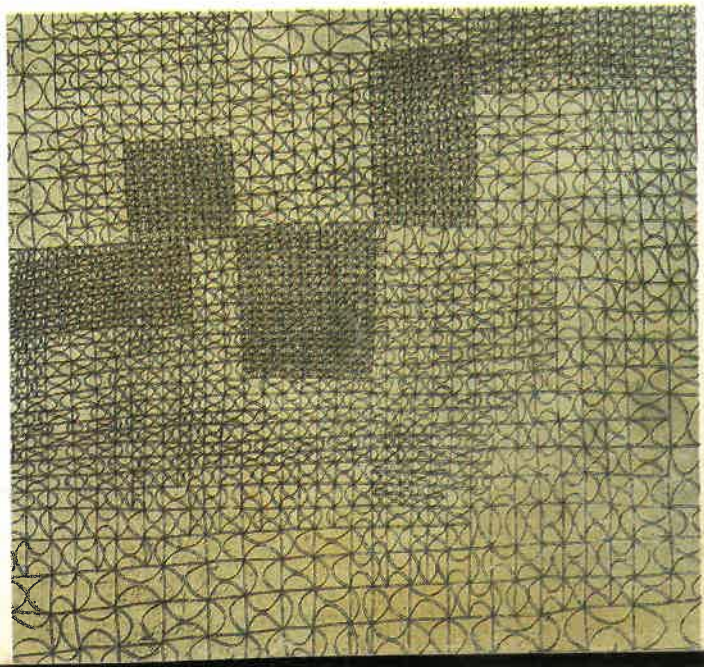
For a long time, he repeated and revelled in this network of lines, varied in colour and denseness and texture. Although he had fully developed this style by 1960, he was often harking back to it even in the 80s and one such is the painting entitled "Magic Carpet". He moved away from the earlier casualness of stroke, roughness of texture and romantic vagueness to a classical precision of line and clarity of effect and a calculated approach.

There was uncanny skill in the execution of this smoothly flowing calligraphic line, with its infinite involutions and convolutions, based on the D and the B form. The wizardry of the line as it went turning and twisting while describing the D and B forms and the erotic overtones of the shapes invested the work with a strange appeal.



A "Roots Series" painting

Filigree work with meandering lines



Later, he dropped the enclosing outline and painted the D and B forms solid, in flat colour, often making them look like chessmen, another of his pet motifs. These forms were arranged separately on the canvas or the paper to make up the total composition.

Linear Ornamentation

In another series of his paintings (or rather drawings) he made small panels filled with rows of dots and dashes and strokes that looked like Arabic calligraphy, in which he quite cleverly caught the form and the look of Islamic calligraphy without actually writing a single word.

Then there was the architectural drawing series in which the interiors or exterior of mosques and other Islamic buildings were fancifully and ornately drawn in pen and ink.

Some are no better than romantic book illustrations but some are quite attractive in an ornate way, like "Mosque" and "The Garden".

The love of ornamentation in the form of linear designs was given full rein in his ingeniously thought up and meticulously rendered little cameos drawn in pen and ink, entitled "Totem Poles" "Pine Cones", "Kites"

Mandalas

Quite different from the rest of his work are his Mandala series of paintings, based on the Mandalas or "Contemplation Tablets" of Tibet. These are bright and flat coloured circular designs superimposed on textured square boards. The designs are symmetrical laterally and are composed of freely swinging rhythmic lines held in perfect balance at some point often marked by a small circle. The bold swinging lines and the bright rich contrasting colours were not at all characteristic of Shemza. For once he seemed to let himself go in the reeling meandering lines and in the richly suffused full bodied colours. He never did work like this before or after and stuck to his meticulous miniature manner, even in the large canvases.

Roots

A very important series that he started drawing and painting towards the end of his life was the "Roots" series. In each example, the whole picture consists of one plant form whose lower half is the underground roots and the upper half is the stalk and leaves and flowers, both revealed equally to the view.

All the plant forms are fanciful and some are fantastic, such as one in which the plant takes the form of a hand and another in which stark branches sticking out of the bare trunk look like the shrivelled hands of a man. The lower half, the roots, often take the form of calligraphy of the Islamic style, in look only, for the scribbles make no known word of Urdu, Persian or Arabic in which this style of calligraphy is used.

The idea sought to be conveyed is that the artist is delving deep into his Islamic past and his Islamic roots.

S. SAFDAR

S. Safdar was a prolific painter and always took part in group exhibitions besides holding about a dozen one-man shows of his work.

The main influences on his work were the memories of Gujrat (Pakistan) where he was born and which is famous for its pottery and for the romance of Sohni Mahiwal. Village damsels, pottery and village houses abound in his early work.

His seven year stay in Bombay, where he worked as a set-designer and painter in film studios, also influenced his work by teaching him the importance of strong firm design and clear convincing perspective. His casual association with the J. J. School of Art and their attempt to revive Indian art on the basis of the Ajanta and Bagh paintings, could not fail to affect him deeply.

Finally, the company of the bright young artists whom he met in Lahore when he came over from Bombay in 1947, imbued him with the modern Cubist and other ideas that were guiding the brush of his peers, Ahmed Parvez and others.

Earliest Work

The earliest work of Safdar falls into three main groups. In the first solo exhibition of his work that was held in the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University in 1957, there were a large number of paintings in which the flat-topped rectangular village houses of mud were arranged in some sort of a pattern suggestive of Cubism with a rustic figure in the foreground enmeshed in the pattern of houses. Another set of paintings was made up of still lifes featuring vases. But the most characteristic work which the artist obviously seemed to do with gusto was one or two village maidens sitting with a water pitcher or a milk-churning vat or a spinning wheel against a background of village houses.

Quite often he laboured on the background to give it a Cubist look and somehow fitted the human figture of the woman into it as part of the linear pattern.

It was obvious his heart was in the figurative part while the rectangular pattern in the background was only a concession to modern taste.

The Grid Pattern

This uneasy combination of the abstract and the figurative continued all through the 50s but he realized that the trend of the times did not favour these pictures of buxom rustic belles and so he cast around for some other way of expressing himself.

Around 1960 he hit upon a rich vein which was not entirely new but he made it his own by treating it in a distinctive style. This consisted of a series of vertical lines crossed by a series of parallel horizontal lines creating a variety of interstices between them. The lines could be shortened or lengthened at will and the intervening spaces could be coloured in a variety of ways.

Sometimes the linear pattern alone was emphasised and sometimes the interstices by filling them with colours.

They could suggest blocks of houses with many lighted windows or in fewer numbers could suggest stained glass windows. Some very crowded and complex ones even suggested the skylines of cities. In any case, it was a very suggestive and very evocative pattern with endless possibilities of permutations and combinations.

To break the monotony, he sometimes added a huge red sun on the top, which further emphasised the landscape character of the design, or drew, over the grid pattern,

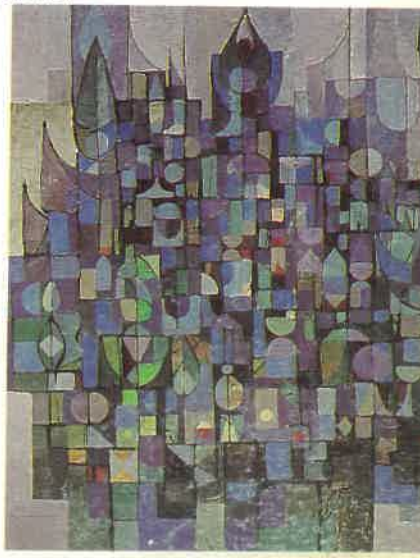


S. Safdar

S. SAFDAR

1924 (Apr.)	*Born at Gujrat (Pakistan).*
1940-47	*Lived in Bombay. Made sets for films.*
1943	*Helped to found Muslim Art Sketch Club.*
1944 & 1946	*Designed stalls for All India Industrial Exhibitions at Karachi.*
1947	*Came to Lahore.*
1948-51	*Worked in Karachi, decorating cinema houses.*
1953	*First solo exhibition (at Arts Council, Lahore).*
1983 (14 Feb.)	*Died at Lahore*

Dense composition with circles, half circles, ovals, half ovals



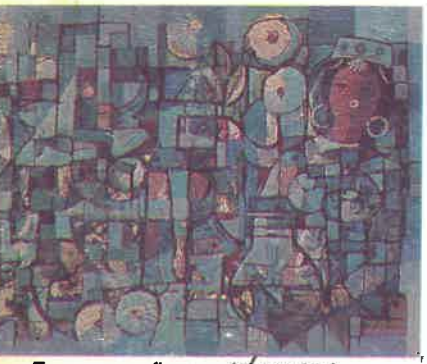
flaring lines shooting upwards, like the branches of a tree, just to vary the rigid geometrical pattern with some free strokes. He even introduced circles and arcs into the grid or chequers pattern, making it suggestive of machines and factories.

Apart from the ingenuity of the linear design, it is the excellent sense of colour harmony that enables the artist to create an impressive painting. Sometimes he works in the range of light pinks and reds and white with some areas of blue on the periphery. Sometimes he works in light orange, with some areas in dark orange and some in dark blue. Other paintings are in flaming scarlet, softened with interspersed areas of dark blue. There is no end to the variety of colour harmonies. And always there is the interplay of the linear pattern in black against the colour pattern in the small enclosed areas of different shapes.

It is something like a kaleidoscope except that the designs are not symmetrical but free – sometimes tied within a grid pattern and sometimes even without that control and constraint.

It is a carefully calculated and meticulously executed art that links up with the Islamic tradition of arabesque patterns but of the asymmetrical type that appears on old silks and fabrics, not the mirror images that one finds on glazed tiles and in stone and wood carving. Of course, this has a modern sensitivity and is often suggestive of Cubism but the curvilinear designs have so much calligraphic line work that the Oriental feeling is dominant.

It is a purely aesthetic exercise with no intellectual content or social comment or even emotional vehemence but it provides sheer aesthetic pleasure to the viewer.



Face, vase, flowers, leaves and geometrical forms

Human limbs and abstract forms



shapes were approximately oblong, diamond or square shaped or just any polygon but always having the look of shards of glass by the look of flatness, translucency, clear outline and greenish or bluish or light brown colour. They overlapped, one behind the other, suggesting receding space.

These neat ethereal translucent forms contrasted with the dense dark centre or root from where they arose and which was painted with a frenzied brush, in deep dark colours, such as brown or blue and often some red and orange.

There were innumerable variations but basically the arrangement was always this: a base or centre very roughly painted in rich and dark and also some very bright colours, while from this base fan out a hand of cards or rather shards of glass, translucent, soft blue and light green and definitely whitish in parts. The overlapping oblong or square or diamond shapes showed clearly one behind the other, creating the illusion of space. This compact composition sometimes existed within a very dark background and sometimes in a soft subdued background, just dark enough to set off the pale whitish flaring shapes.

By the prominent use of white, some have hastily declared Mashkoor's style to be derived from that of Lubna Agha in 1970-80. The former uses oblong, diamond and other geometrical shapes to build his compositions while Lubna used mostly round and oval shapes. These were mostly spread out at one level or plane while Mashkoor's forms were placed one behind the other, that is, they were composed in space. They were translucent and their icy blue or glassy green was contrasted with the richly colourful, dense and dark centre from where they arose or where their roots mingled. Lubna made much more generous use of white during her purely abstract period (1970-80) than Mashkoor. His use of white or rather whitish and chalky colours is much more subtle and sophisticated. It may be mentioned that both the artists were pupils of Mansur Rahi and graduated from the Karachi School of Art, she in 1967 and he in 1972, where Rahi was Principal .



Composition with crystal bars and bits.

Even this use of white came to an end in his exhibition of March-April, 1987 at the Sheraton Art Gallery, Karachi. In this exhibition, which was his biggest, one could see marked changes in style from what he had been doing from 1983 to 1986. For the first time, he introduced the figure in many of his paintings, actually the female nude, half lost within the jigsaw puzzle of his usual abstract forms. It was no doubt a little incongruous to have geometrical forms and realistic figure together but it undeniably transformed the painting and made it come alive.

In the same exhibition he put up abstract work of a different kind that he had started doing from 1985, in which frenetic brushwork and impulsive strokes of the brush were applied to the canvas to create an excited and turbulent painting in the manner of American Action Painting. Gone were the cunningly organized paintings of 1983-86 in which clear-cut geometrical forms were carefully composed in space, one behind the other. Only the root or base or nexus from which these forms arose or from where they spread out, was painted roughly, with freedom and abandon, and with no attempt to create clear forms in space. This smaller area of his earlier paintings set off by contrast the larger subtly planned area in which definite forms were organized and evocative forms were created. But this lesser central area which could be dashed off more easily, was spread over the whole canvas in the new series that he presented, and which he continued to paint for some years. Perhaps it was the result of fatigue because the older style demanded more pains and effort or perhaps it was just out of a mood of utter recklessness, a devil-may-care attitude.

Composition with shards of glass.



The exhibition he put up in December, 1989, was full of these paintings. It seemed as if he was churning the whole canvas with a thick brush, using colours quite different from his earlier whitish blue, green and brown to deep red and dark purple and orange and mauve. The smouldering colours and the stormy effect of the wild brushwork created quite a different effect from the earlier sweet and suave paintings.

Another interesting departure that he made in his exhibition of July, 1988 was the introduction of the heads and necks of horses emerging out of a composition made largely of geometrical forms. This combination of the realistic and the abstract did not succeed and so his fascination with horses began to express itself in paintings wholly devoted to horses.



Composition using texture made with pressed objects.

By 1991 he was freely turning out paintings of horses in all conceivable positions, running, rearing, prancing and so on. To some extent, he subjects the form to abstraction but even then there are enough apt and realistic touches to please the eye. The swift sweeping strokes of the drawing and the vigorously brushed in colours give the work a marked emotive quality in keeping with the exciting subject. The free use of rich reds, dark blues and deep purples heightens the drama of the noble animal in action.

Abstract Composition



MAQSOOD ALI



Maqsood Ali is a leading abstract painter of Pakistan using geometrical forms.

The noteworthy feature of his art is that it has evolved organically, stage by stage, from the purely realist to the semi-abstract to the pure abstract. Now, the wheel is coming full circle for he is beginning to introduce realistic elements in his abstract compositions.

When he began to exhibit in group shows in the late 60s, he revelled in painting realistically the scenes and people of Sindh whose charms held him in thrall for long.

Like all desert folk, the Sindhis too wear colourful dresses, The maroon mantle called ajrak, with block printed designs in black and indigo blue, is the all-purpose cloth used by both men and women to wear and to spread or wrap or whatever.

The long frocks that the women wear are covered with beautiful embroidery and especially the collar is covered with a chequer pattern richly embroidered, all over the bosom.

Sindh is also rich in handicrafts and is full of historical monuments and many shrines decorated with coloured glazed tiles.

All this fascinated Maqsood and he painted many pictures of Sindh, trying to capture the allure of the place in straightforward realistic studies.

However, by the time he held his first solo exhibition in 1969, he was already feeling dissatisfied with the plain reproduction of appearances. The square pattern of the collar, which covered the whole bosom, sparked off his sally into the realms of Cubist abstraction. It was an easy transition from realism to abstraction as far as painting a bust of the woman was concerned. It could be shown as a cube. The head also could be divided into square or rectangular areas by casting an appropriate light on it. The arms, hands and fingers could be similarly modified into cylinders and the dress could be made to fall in geometrical forms.

The process was applied by Maqsood on donkeys and bullock carts and of course on houses, for the last are already geometrical in the simple cube shape in which they are found in the villages and the small towns of Sindh.

Maqsood, the lover of Sindh, joined enthusiastically in the celebrations when President Yahya Khan decided in 1970 to break up West Pakistan and revive the four provinces into which the country had been divided administratively since the time of the British. Sindh again became a separate province with its own Chief Minister and Assembly and cabinet. Maqsood honoured the occasion by painting a huge mural showing a new sun rising on Sindh.

This was a panoramic view of Sindh landscape and people painted in the same semi-abstract style discussed above.

It may be mentioned that although the dresses in Sindh, both of men and women are largely maroon, or red and orange, Maqsood always painted them in cool colours_ various shades of green, mainly, and also blue and pink.

The first solo exhibition was held in October, 1969 at Karachi; the second in which "The New Sun Rises on Sindh" was exhibited was in October, 1970; the third in October, 1972. In this third exhibition, Maqsood had almost abandoned the depiction of Sindhi life but had retained the images of Sindhi patterns and designs, especially the chequers pattern, of which he was enamoured.

MAQSOOD ALI

1935	Born at Lucknow.
1950	Moved to Bombay
1953-56	Studied in Nootan Kala Niketan Art School, Bombay.
1957	Migrated to Pakistan. Settled in Karachi.
1962-69	Worked in advertising as Art Director
1969	First solo exhibition (at Karachi). Later in 1970, 1971, 1972, 1982, 1986, 1991, 1992 (at Karachi).
1981-88	Principal, Central Institute of Arts, Karachi.
1994	Joined as Principal of North City School of Arts, Karachi.

Abstract composition with some petal forms.



Shakir Ali, the doyen of the modern artists of Pakistan in those days, wrote in the brochure of that exhibition

"Maqsood Ali has been influenced by the sun-soaked landscape of Sindh, its people and their colourful dresses and draperies.

"The patterns of Sindhi draperies have now been dissolved into chequers patterns and colour-loaded texture. Maqsood has travelled far ahead from his earlier imageries of Sindhi landscape. He is now experimenting with the basic problems of texture, colours and composition."

The chequers pattern, or design built up with squares, was now enclosed in a misty dark border within which glimmered the small squares, some light, some dark, some both. Almost always, one painting was in one colour, and always slightly murky and dark. The lighted areas were only a few tones lighter and did not have to be bright to contrast with the dark areas. Other related colours were used barely as a suggestion, Thus, in a maroon painting, there would be slight touches of blue or rather purple in the dark areas and red in the light areas.

The use of the chequers pattern was not new in Pakistani art and some lesser known artists, like Rumanna and Habib Burki, had used it in the early 60 but both these artists disappeared quickly from the art scene. One square painting by each of them was printed on the cover of the Pakistan Quarterly and shows a simple division of areas and varied colouring of the different squares to build up an attractive design.

Later, Safdar used this pattern in many paintings but he also divided the whole design diagonally and even superimposed arcs and circles to create a variety of geometrical areas out of the small squares. Zubeida Agha also used this pattern in some paintings and made them look like the lighted windows of a block of flats by filling the dark squares with yellow or red or orange colour.

But Maqsood's work was more subtle and sensitive. The contours were not sharp but dim because the whole composition was enclosed in a hazy setting. Each small square too had delicate outlines that appeared and disappeared fitfully from area to area. The colour

Abstract composition using chequers pattern.





Chequers pattern heavily overlaid with free form colour.

too was rough and patchy and textured. It was a delicate and sensitive way of using a rigid geometrical pattern by enveloping it in a cloud of colour that partly revealed and partly concealed.

After that there was a ten years' break in Maqsood's art life and his next solo exhibition was held in 1982. The time lag was a period of maturing for in the work that he exhibited in 1982, the squares had become dynamic and full of movement. They were no longer in upright and sideways rows, as in a chequer board but often tilted to make the whole bunch stand on end like a diamond or slung on a curve and also varied in size. In fact the bunches of small squares were played against the much larger squares all around. In short, there was considerable movement, even commotion in the picture.

Squares were the building blocks of creation for the artist and therefore he constantly contrasted their form with the surrounding formless mist or cloud of colour, cosmos against chaos, crystallised matter against inchoate mass.

Though there was much variety in the work, the most typical composition had a dark background framing the picture, like dark clouds in space and a few squares in the middle glimmering into view, some large, some small, some bunched, some scattered, whether in upright rows or tilted. They seemed to be like things emerging out of nothingness.

One would think that there was little scope for variety in such a restricted subject and even less scope for progress but Maqsood had used this motif for ten years, and although he had not been very productive, he had shown in the 1982 exhibition that he could create quite a variety of paintings in this style.

His exhibition in March, 1986, showed further advance and sophistication in the use of the same chequers motif. For one thing, in the new paintings, he began using brighter colours and this, perhaps, was a reflection of a happier life as he had remarried in 1982 after separation in 1980. In colours his previous work was monochrome and dark while in form it was confined to squares. From canvas to canvas, there was variation of colour but very little within each. The form of the square too was very rigidly followed, with variation only in size and in the tilt or angle or curve of the rows of small squares. It was all pretty austere.

Suddenly, in the 1986 exhibition, the squares were bunching up into flower patterns, here and there, like four squares around a central square, or they were circled within an oval or cut across by a sweeping arc that created all kinds of triangles and other shapes by intersecting the squares.

The curves and arcs and rounded forms introduce another kind of sensibility into the composition, sugestive of living things and softer emotions., Often long tear shape or petal shape ovals were introduced and two or three of these linked together made flowers of sorts, fanciful creations, no doubt, but with a touch of warm nature in a welter of hard lifeless squares. The squares were sprouting life.

Together with these curvilinear forms is the use of new colours, rarely used before, as bright red and orange and green.

In fact in some paintings, the whole spectrum of colours is used either in separate outlined areas or by tonal treatment in which one colour runs into another.

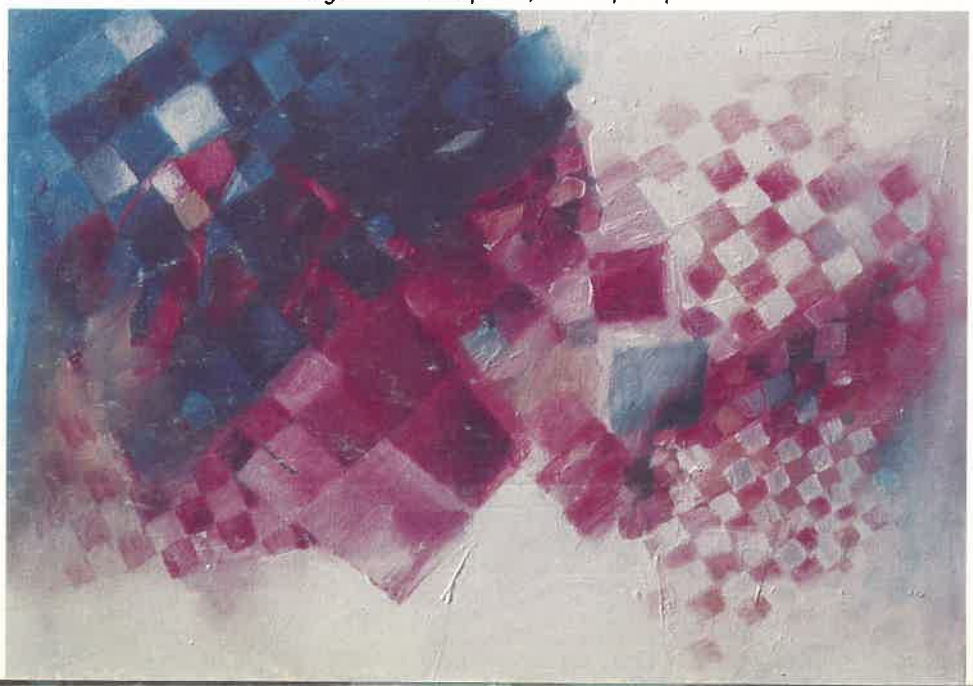
Tempera Paintings

This brightness, cheerfulness and colourfulness was highest in the tempera paintings of which there were about a dozen in the exhibition, much smaller than his oil paintings.

In these the strict square shape was abandoned. For example, in one, the basic square pattern was superimposed with a number of balloon-like ovals. When these intersect with the squares, they create a variety of three or four-sided polygons. These coloured flat, with contrasting colours, create the visual hypnotic effect found in Op Art.

In some tempera paintings he used flat-painted floral forms, like the cutouts used in Sindhi *rilli* applique work with blank space around. His latest work (1994) includes even a female face or imaginary portrait, though the squares are still lurking somewhere around.

Large and small squares, linked tip to tip.



IMRAN MIR

Imran Mir has been exploring the beauty of geometrical forms, especially the circle, the square and the triangle.

His canvases are large, usually six foot high, and his designs are linear, done in a thick but uniform line. He held a large one-man show in November, 1984 and another in April, 1987.

In the first, he tried out many ways of displaying the beauty of the circle, often by placing a six foot circle within a six foot square. Other squares and circles were drawn within the larger ones. When long diagonals sweep from one corner to the other, they create in their path triangles where they intersect with squares, and segments where they intersect with circles. Many other forms also emerge, as a result of intersections, such as rhombs, parallelograms, triangles, quadrangles and many other shapes.

Besides these straight-sided forms, other forms are also created which have one or more sides curved, such as a segment, a crescent, a spandrel (a rightangle whose two sides are joined by an inward curve, as when a circle is drawn within a square of the same size).

Circles within circles create many other curved forms but all these are forms of plane geometry not solid, such as cones or cubes or cylinders. In other words, the lines of these forms all move up and down and across, not inward and outward.

Moreover, conventional and symmetrical geometrical forms are sedulously avoided, such as the four-petalled flower which emerges when four circles with equal radii intersect each other at the centre.

Likewise, squares are not employed in the traditional manner of chequers, colouring the squares alternately black and white. Nor does he divide the series of squares with diagonals, creating a number of triangles.

Imran's play with the circle and the square is asymmetrical. Thus, in one large composition with a blue ground, he has drawn the usual six foot high circle which fills the canvas from edge to edge. Within that, at the base, is a three foot circle and to balance this, there are smaller circles at top right and left. But this becomes too symmetrical for Imran and therefore he makes a small circle to snuggle next to the three foot circle like a satellite.

Geometrically Linear

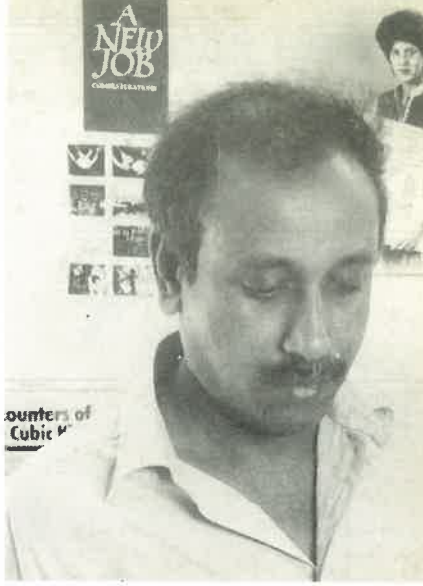
At this stage, Imran's work was completely linear and the line was purely geometrical, which could be drawn with a ruler and compass. There were no meandering lines, no free lines. All were strictly controlled within mathematical patterns.

But they had their own rhythms and feelings. Horizontal lines are placid and serene. Vertical lines are firm and strong and stable. Diagonal lines have movement and action Circles convey a sense of fullness and completeness and perfection.

Moreover, each has endless associations in the human mind. Horizontal lines suggest broad horizons. Vertical lines bring to mind tall trees, high masts, lofty spires. The circle is the most suggestive of all forms and also the most beautiful. It reminds of the sun and the moon and round faces and eyes and breasts and wheels and much else.

Space

Although Imran's work is purely linear on a flat plane and although his images are not conceived as so many areas or spaces or facets fitted together, nevertheless the

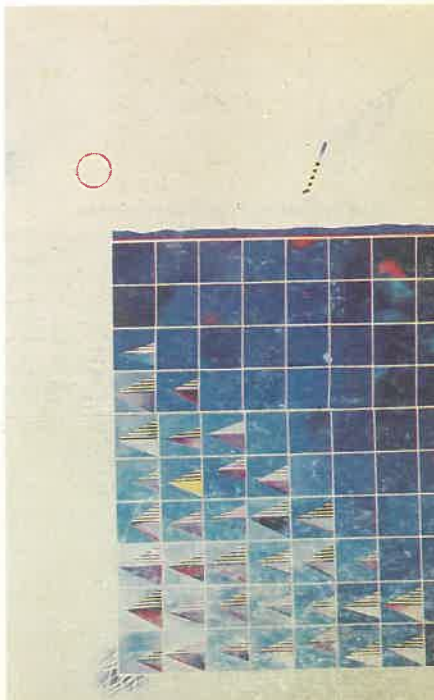


Imran Mir

IMRAN MIR

1950	*Born at Karachi.*
1972	*Graduated from Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi.*
1976	*Master's degree in Communication Design from Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Canada.*
1984	*First solo exhibition (in Karachi).*
1990	*Solo exhibition of "computer graphics" (first of its kind in Pakistan).*

Squares and triangles.





Squares divided diagonally and vertically.

squares and circles and the intersecting lines do enclose areas within and without them and these form certain patterns. If these were each differently coloured, they would become more prominent but this is not Imran's way.

All kinds of interesting shapes emerge from the intersection of the lines, especially when straight lines intersect curving lines or when straight-sided forms intersect round-sided forms or when bigger and still bigger circles swell from the same base.

More Freedom

The work exhibited by Imran in April, 1987, was much more free and relaxed.

Gone was the austere and severe look of his earlier dark and colourless paintings, for he had started indulging in the use of large areas of bright colours.

Abandoned also was the strict limitation to linear design for now he was using plenty of half-tone effects although these were all in the background while the main imagery was still purely linear.

No longer were the forms confined to purely geometrical shapes that could be made with a ruler and compass. He introduced some free forms that involved freehand drawing, sometimes vaguely floral, sometimes a network of curves and so on, which softened the rigidity of the main geometrical design.

There even appeared in his work a certain amount of playfulness or whimsy in the introduction of odd shapes and their strange placement, like a carrot hanging over a pyramid or an enlarged matchstick with a flame at the tip, hanging in mid air.

All this bespoke a more relaxed mood and a more sunny disposition.

Even now however, there was hardly any glimpse of life in the imagery although sometimes the grid pattern of squares suggested the lighted windows of large blocks of houses or offices with steel frame and glass windows. In one case, there seemed to be a horizon on which were shown softly curving hills (?) that could just as well be a lying female figure. Sometimes dark purple colours with undulating shades are suggestive of clouds and at other times criss-crossed thick lines appear to be tangled branches.

But all this glimpse of real life is very furtive and sporadic. The main thing is the new urge that he has to rough up his severely correct and precisely geometrical creations whether by giving half-tone colour effects in the background or even by adding a rough edge of colour to the sharp, too precise forms or a rough patch or doodle placed next to the geometrical form which reduces its hardness or a bunch of curving lines drawn in one or more corners of the grid pattern, to change the mood.

Triangle and Square

Abstract played against concrete.



In this second exhibition, the artist played with the shape of the triangle just as in the first exhibition he had played with the circle.

In both cases, the square is used as the setting or frame of reference. He is fascinated by the tall isosceles triangle. Sometimes he places it slightly left off centre and sometimes right. Sometimes he uses it singly and sometimes doubly and quadruply and in one case as many as thirtysix, of slightly varying sizes, are placed within the squares of a grid pattern, diagonally. He is fond of dividing the triangle vertically, leaving one half plain (with some flat colour) and filling the other half with thick bands, upright or across.

Almost in all cases, there is in the background a chequers pattern, filling the space, wholly or partly. The squares are filled with colours that are shaded off, or, rather, a variety of shaded colours are painted on the canvas and over them are drawn the lines of the chequers pattern, which is the easier way of creating the effect.

Sometime the lines of the chequers pattern too are tonal, that is, growing dim or clear, from area to area.

The biggest painting in the exhibition was in two panels of 6 x 5 feet, adding up to a total of 6 feet high and 10 feet long canvas. In one panel, first a ground of varying tones of red and purple is created and over this are painted thick vertical stripes of black.

The artist has, at places, rather hesitantly, made geometrical forms suggestive of things and people but this could perhaps be done more explicitly because the too pure beauty of geometrical forms acquires added meaning and charm when it also suggests life and the world.

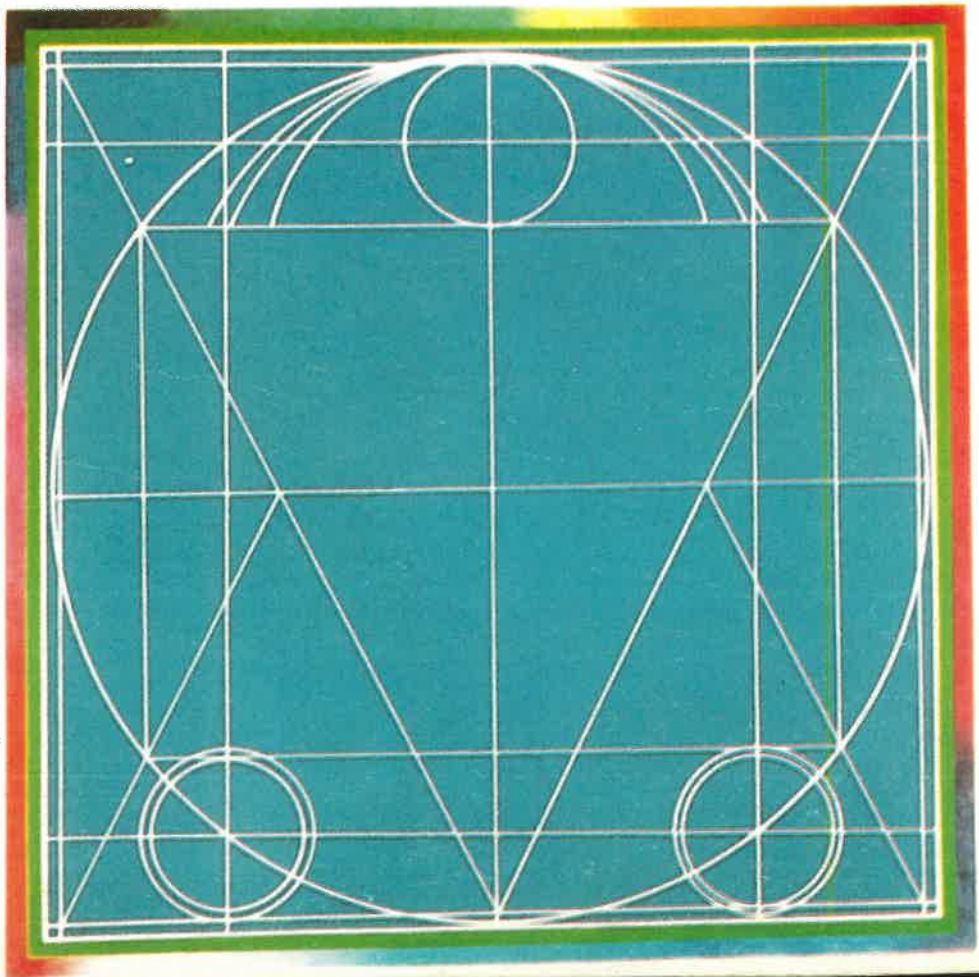
Computer Graphics

Surprisingly, glimpses of life and people enter into Imran's work when he starts using the mechanical medium of the computer to create paintings. Quite a sensation was created when Imran displayed his Computer Graphics for the first time in the group show held at the American Center of Karachi in July, 1990. These were paintings made with the computer instead of the brush and were seen in the country for the first time. No doubt, computers were being used by many advertising companies in Karachi for designing ads but no halftone work was being done and none in colour. In these pictures, for the first time, complex compositions were made with many colours in various graded tones.

Imran has been known for his rigidly linear, starkly geometric abstract art, with very little colour and mostly flat at that. However, working with the mechanical tool of the computer, he seemed to have loosened up a bit. Now he is using not only his favourite circles and triangles but human and animal forms. In place of the former sharp linear outlines, there are fuzzy edges of the images and many graded tones of colour, all of which, we are told, are made with thousands of square dots.

Naturally, one does not expect Imran to paint realistic pictures. Even when he depicts human and animal figures, he creates odd settings, strange scenes, and surrealistic formulations.

This adds yet another dimension to Imran Mir's work.



Circles, squares and triangles.



Wahab Jaffer

WAHAB JAFFER

Wahab Jaffer entered the field of art as late as 1972 when he started taking lessons from Ali Imam but was fascinated by the work of Ahmed Parvez and remained his friend and pupil from 1972 to 1979, when Parvez died.

He started exhibiting his paintings in group shows from 1974 but held his first one man show in 1981. What he put up in this exhibition was a pale shadow of Parvez. They were purely abstract compositions in which such forms were loosely scattered as crescents, arcs, S shapes, reverse S shapes, tapering strips, wavy strips and such other images outlined in black and filled with different colours, which was the pictorial alphabet used by Parvez.

However, there was a great difference between the work of the master and the pupil. Wahab's composition was too loose and sparse and incoherent compared with Parvez's closely knit and compact designs. Wahab's black outlines were hesitant fumblings compared with Parvez's bold, firm and swinging lines. The colours too were pale and wan as against the elder artist's deep, rich and singing colours.

Perhaps reacting to the constant comparison of his work with that of Parvez, Wahab gave up abstract painting and became figurative.

In 1983, 1984 and 1985 he held solo exhibitions in which he put up paintings in each of which there was just one female face, often only from chin to forehead, frontally drawn, with wide open eyes in a fixed stare. The eyes, the nose, the lips were most crudely and thickly drawn and the face was so flat that it looked as if cut out of paper. In some paintings, there were two or three faces, exactly alike, with the same long oval formation, long noses, short, thick lips, wide open staring eyes, all utterly expressionless.

To add some striking feature to the picture, which was otherwise quite rudimentary and primitive, he painted the faces and hair and busts in lurid reds and deep blues and the background purple and orange and other such loud colours.

Composition



WAHAB JAFFER

1941 *Born at Poona, India.*
1971 *Apprenticed in Ali Imam's Studio, Karachi.*
1972-79 *Worked with and learned from the late Ahmed Parvez.*
1981 *First Solo exhibition (at Karachi). Many later.*



Mask-like Faces

Moreover, in many of his paintings he painted on the heads of the women strange headgears and hair styles in which the locks of hair were shown waving upward like flames. Sometimes these garish exhalations surrounded the face.

Mercifully, he decided to give up painting faces and reverted to abstract painting of a type in which drawing skill was not much required. This time he did not use the imagery and the alphabet of Parvez's abstract paintings but developed a pictorial language of his own.

It is always a compact bunch or knot of diverse forms, here and there glancingly outlined in black and filled with different bright colours, in which red, purple, yellow and orange predominate. The black outline is sometimes prominent and sometimes subdued to a bare suggestion. The forms flare out and taper off on all sides and the colours also shade off and merge into the background. This background is divided into large areas, each in one colour merging at the edges.

Some of his abstract imagery looks flamboyant like a big canna flower with its large red or orange petals flying in all directions. But of course Wahab's compositions have endless variety and one cannot pin them down to one likeness. However, in every case it is a compact bunch of forms whose outlines taper out all around and whose colours shade off and merge in the background which is equally colourful.

In short, Wahab's composition is extremely well knit, well balanced and has the same placid poise which characterises the artist himself. Just a touch of the old black outline lingers to firm up the composition. The colours are deep and intense but undulating and fading into each other and softened at the edges.

Thus, both the arrangement of forms and the harmony of colours is eminently satisfying. Often it has been noticed that in a group exhibition being held in a big hall, Wahab Jaffer's paintings are the most colourful and attractive and eye-catching.

Ebb and flow of deep colours.





Zahoorul Akhlaque

ZAHOORUL AKHLAQUE

Zahoorul Akhlaque joined the famous old art institute of Lahore in 1958 when it was elevated from the Mayo School of Art to the National College of Art. The College was lucky to get in that year a new Principal in the person of Prof. Sponenburgh while Shakir Ali was promoted Professor of Art. Both brought with them fresh ideas acquired during education abroad. A new consciousness in the fields of Design, Fine Arts and Architecture swept through the College. The Principal sent out expeditions of teachers and students to Swat and Cholistan to study and collect folk art.

As a student of Fine Art, Zahoor came in close contact with Shakir Ali and received his close attention and encouragement. After graduation from the College in 1962, Zahoor joined as a teacher in the Fine Arts Department of which Shakir Ali was head.

Under the influence of such a highly gifted teacher and guide, it was natural for Zahoor to be influenced by the Cubist style and other modern ideas of Shakir Ali.

No doubt, Zahoor tried to wean himself away from this influence, which was overpowering in his student days. Still some of the surviving work of the mid 60s that one can see, is definitely the result of the precept and practice of Shakir Ali. For example, Shakir Ali was the first to use calligraphy as an element of painting . Also, he loved to create rough textural effects on the canvas . Zahoor painted heavily weathered walls or pages of old manuscripts with discoloured paper and in these created interesting variations of colour and tone. Calligraphy was introduced by him on the depicted manuscript pages or royal edicts or supposedly old documents, not as legible writing in the great tradition of Islamic calligraphy (which Shakir Ali did) but only as illegible patterns that looked like calligraphy. Obviously, Zahoor was trying to combine his contemporary sense of design and modern love of texture with certain elements of our honoured traditions.

During 1966-67, he studied at the Hornsey College of Art, London and during 1968-69 at the Royal College of Art. Four years of higher education in these famous art institutions and the opportunity to see and study the art treasures of London. naturally helped the artist to evolve and mature.

Windows within Windows



He had already used the format of the manuscript page and the royal edict with calligraphic effects in his paintings before going to London. There he was irresistibly drawn towards the finest of Mughal miniatures treasured in the British Museum.

On his return to his post in the National College of Art, Lahore, he made much use of the miniature format, not to paint miniatures as such but easel paintings in oil in which a miniature painting was a subject. Often he added traditional borders to the inset miniature on its bottom edge. The miniature contained a dim figure or two, lightly suggested with tonal treatment, with a definite space and atmosphere of its own. This was a big change from his previous work in which the linear patterns and linear rhythms of calligraphy were his main preoccupation.

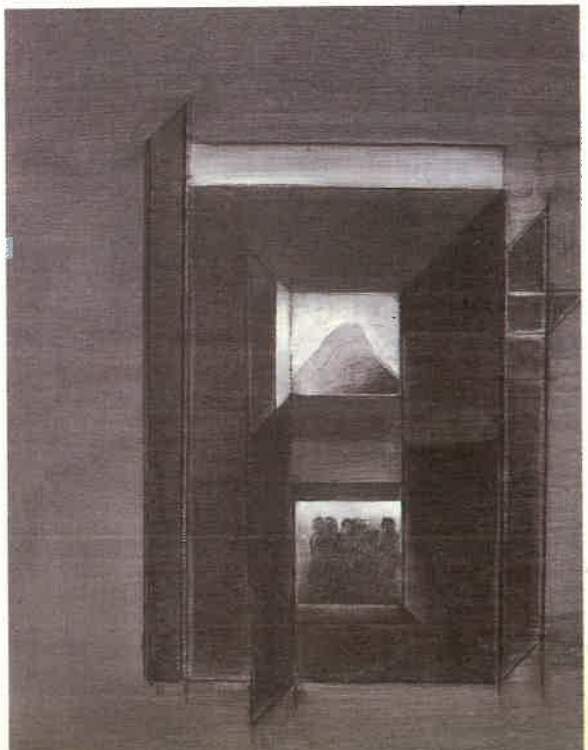
A very different kind of stylistic feature or mannerism that his work acquired on return from London was the grid pattern or chequers which became the inevitable background of most of his paintings and etchings, almost like his signature. This grid pattern was often used by the modern American artist, Jasper Johns.

Two very typical examples of his work with these features were the two huge triptychs that he put up in the National Exhibition held at Lahore in 1985.

The first one, entitled "Landscape to Landscape", was 9 x 4 feet in three vertical panels, all divided into small squares of 3 x 3 inches . These squares were filled with grey-blue and grey-green in varying shades so as to soften the harshness of the grid pattern.

Against this uncompromisingly abstract framework, the artist plays up the concrete and the living. The rigid is contrasted with floating clouds here and there which suggest that this whole green canvas could represent a vast rectangulated field. In this way space is created. Time is created by painting in each of the three panels symbols of the past, the present and the future. A piece of Gandhara sculpture, dating back to the 1st or 2nd century A. D. stands for the past . A peasant riding a buffalo represents the present. while a foetus is a symbol of the future.

In the huge painting that he displayed in the National Exhibition held at Lahore in March, 1985, Zahoor took up a nationalist theme, the heroes of the Pakistan Movement, which was formally launched at Lahore in March, 1940. Again the canvas was divided into small squares and many of them were filled with small portraits of the makers of Pakistan. These were actually photographs pasted and painted over. In the centre was a large portrait of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a youthful portrait which was very unusual as portraits of the Quaid go.



Views through Windows.

ZAHOORUL AKHLAQUE

1941 (Feb. 4)	*Born.*
1958-62	*Studied at National College of Art, Lahore, and graduated in Fine Art.*
1962-94	*Taught in same college.*
1963	*Solo exhibition at Karachi.*
1964	*Solo exhibition at Rawalpindi*
1965	*Solo exhibition at Lahore.*
1966-67	*Studied at the Hornsey School of Art, London.*
1968-69	*Studied at Royal College of Art, London, and graduated from there.*
1969	*Travelled in Europe.*
1974	*Solo exhibition at Karachi.*
1987-89	*Went to U.S.A. on Fulbright Scholarship, and worked at Institute of Sacred Music, Religion and Art, Yale University, U.S.A.*
1994	*Retired from National College of Arts. Solo exhibition at Karachi.*



Windows with miniature-style borders,

This inflow of nationalist sentiment in the work of an abstract artist wholly preoccupied with aesthetic values was a departure. That his feelings could also be aroused by social ills and the fate of mankind became clear when in 1983 he was selected to represent Pakistan for "Hommage Aux Prix Nobel", honouring Dr. Abdus Salam, by Gallery Borgeson, Malmo, Sweden. Zahoor went to New York under this project and made a series of etchings there at the Print Making Workshop.

The theme of these etchings is the horror of the nuclear holocaust. The mushroom cloud of the atomic explosion is shown as a dark circular form with many grey tones, while through the smoke two nude figures are seen fleeing, perhaps Adam and Eve being turned out of the Garden of Eden. The title "Farmaan" or Edict, suggests some such thing, implying that this tragedy which has overtaken mankind is a heavenly edict.

In view of the Pakistani origin of Dr. Abdus Salam in whose honour these etchings were created, an oriental touch has been given to the work by casting them in the format of miniatures, really as inset within a bigger picture. The miniature has been provided with traditional borders at the top and bottom edges or one of these only. Sometimes the subject of the miniature overflows the borders, as is the case with Mughal and Persian miniatures .

In February, 1986, Zahoor held a solo exhibition of his latest work in Karachi after twelve years and it was eagerly awaited because his work was so rarely seen while his reputation was so high.

He put up 18 large mixed media and acrylic paintings in most of which he had used his usual format of a picture within a picture, a rectangle within a rectangle, and both on a ground divided into small squares.

The inset rectangle was set off by roughly painting the area outside its top left corner. Inside the rectangle, a few rough brush strokes barely suggested a human figure, a female nude.

In some paintings, the brush went wild and raged across the outlines of the inner rectangle. Sometimes, it smeared up the whole inner and outer rectangle, leaving only some light area in the middle.

Since all this was in almost monochrome, light and dark grey, with only a touch of colour here and there, one can imagine the effect on the viewer, who saw the "paintings" as sloppy, slovenly smears of paint.

In one painting, one can glimpse an idea which the artist is trying to project by depicting a foetus and the cloud of the atomic blast, one symbolizing birth and the other death.

There is also moral indignation in two paintings in which the artist recalls the shameful incident of Nawabpur (Punjab) in which a landlord forced the women of his tenant to parade nude in public. But it was all far too casual, clumsy and slipshod.

The best painting, in which the artist had obviously taken some pains, was "A Study for a Butterfly". It shows a huge black cloud representing an atomic explosion. Caught in this fearful dark cloud is a colourful butterfly painted in bright green and orange . It is bravely fluttering its way through deadly smoke, as the symbol of hope and surviving life. Here the symbolism is so apt and the rendering so adequate that the idea and the image become one.

A private show of a few of Zahoor's paintings was put up in April, l 990 at Karachi but a public exhibition at an art gallery was held in April-May. 1991 in this metropolis.

On view were ten small paintings, about 10 x 13 inches, and ten quite big ones, ranging from 52 x 37 inches to 8 l x 56 inches, all done in acrylic paint on canvas . The former were freely and colourfully painted while the latter were rigidly drawn and meticulously painted in various shades of grey, with a touch of colour in some and much colour in one that was rather uncharacteristic.

Almost all had the same format, a vertical rectangle. This linked up with his old practice of making a painting within a painting. The inner one was a miniature painting with a broad border, set within an easel painting with nothing but a plain or roughly textured area.

There is a playful ambiguity between a miniature painting and a window because the broad border is sometimes made to look like a window built deeply recessed into the wall. But, in many cases, the corners of the deeply recessed window are drawn in perspective in such a way that the window, one minute seems to be receding and the next moment projecting.

The illusion of the window is further encouraged by showing a scene, like a mountain peak or simply a horizon and a sunset glow or a dimly outlined figure.

Mostly the window is in the form of two squares. The image of the peak above is reflected below or the peak below is reflected above or both the peaks are upright. Sometimes the imagery is unintelligible and vaguely suggestive. In one case it is a lemon that could even be an eye because it has a dot in the middle like a pupil.

Mysterious effects are aimed at in almost all cases either by making the image ambiguous or unintelligible or strange like an odd flying object in one window which has a horizon and a sky.



Remembrance of a famous old miniature.

In this same case, the whole painting has been bathed in a purple mist that grows lighter upward and thins out here and there to show glimpses of the blue sky. Floating in the dark mist is an orb. Both the square windows have mysterious images — the yellow flying object in one and in the other a wedge that could be the hull of a ship.

So one finds two tendencies simultaneously at work in Zahoor's paintings. One, he is playing with geometrical forms, chiefly squares and rectangles and juggling with perspective, teasingly and bewilderingly (so that a window is deeply recessed below but flat above). Two, he is trying to create mysterious effects by bathing his paintings in dim dark twilight through which glimmer forth either strange mountain peaks or shrouded figures or dim horizons or doors and windows, walls and ventilators that make confusing and impossible perspectives.

The best example of the latter is his huge 8 l x 56 inch painting in which a dark grey fills the canvas below and grows lighter above. Through the darkness emerges his usual design of a rectangle within the rectangle of the canvas. The chalky uneven white lines on the dark ground were called "luminous evidence" by some gushing young admirer.

The design is flat, without perspective, and is made up of two squares, one below the other, each surrounded with rectangles of the same length as the squares. The whole looks like a big door with two central squares and many surrounding panels.

The best example of the mysterious and eerie effects is a large painting in which a human figure is very prominent, unlike Zahoor's other work which is quite dehumanized.

In this huge vertical canvas, 77 x 52 inches, there is as usual, another vertical rectangle with a broad border. In its upper half is a square within a square. By joining the adjoining corners of the two squares, the look of a gallery or tunnel has been created at whose far end is a square opening filled with sky blue colour.

Lower down, a woman with long flowing hair is shown in silhouette, with her back to the viewer, gazing at the opening at the far end. The place, the person and the occasion are all lost in mystery.

This work is not typical of Zahoor but it is more evocative and humanistic than the jugglery of squares and rectangles and the creation of puzzling and impossible perspectives.



Quddus Mirza

QUDDUS MIRZA

All art is an attempt to put across one's feelings with all the freshness of an immediately felt experience. But the medium comes in the way — the brush and paint, the hammer and chisel, the bow and the stringed instrument. And yet these are the means for projecting what is stirring in the heart. The more rules and requirements, forms and approved manners and styles are laid down for expression, the weaker and dimmer becomes the inner experience that the artist sets out to convey.

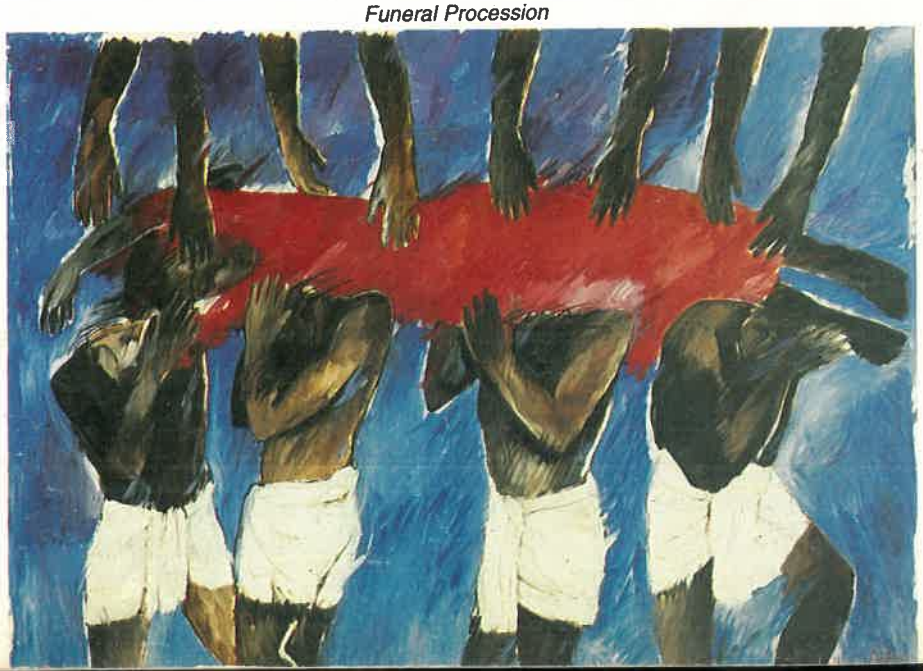
That is why great artists like Paul Klee and others have admired the refreshing spontaneity of child art. Paul Klee is said to have asked children to draw a certain subject and then he used to do it in the same way but with the maturity that comes from years of work.

Quddus Mirza is another such artist who has had the benefit of the very best art education in Pakistan and England, holding a B.F.A. degree from the National College of Art, Lahore, and an M.A. degree in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London. Incidentally, he is the first Pakistani to get an M.A. degree in painting from that famous institution. In fact, he distinguished himself there and won a prestigious prize when he was in the 5th and final year.

Despite being so highly trained and skilled in the art of painting he is enamoured of the artless outpourings of children messing with paint on paper. He seems to be at pains to hide all his advanced training and to let the child in him move his hands and his brush. Thus he throws overboard all the conventions of art, because all art is convention, rather conventions invented in different ages and climes. Certain forms, it is agreed, will mean certain things. But the child is innocent of all conventions and he invents his own personal way of depicting objects and expressing feelings.

Quddus Mirza adopts the child's approach. Of course, the " artful artlessness " of the artist is deceptive because though he seems to have messed around with the brush and daubed the paper or canvas with the bright unsullied colours of the child, he has steathily introduced much meaning into a picture that looks naive and childlike. For example, in his "Homage to a Girl Holding Flower", the image of the woman is as odd and amusing as a child's work, but in the belly of the woman he has made the bare suggestion of an unborn child and so the whole picture acquires quite another meaning for the woman is holding a flower of another sort.

Funeral Procession



The Cloud-burst



Likewise in his 1994 exhibition the fearsome red-turbaned man with his chin jutting out could be a symbol of cruel authority, either a wadera (landlord) or a military dictator. That he "sups with terror" is evident from the two big knives lying on the table and the big red bowl again has a dreadful look. There are a few chairs aimlessly placed here and there in the picture and it is rumoured that they are the artist's own symbol of power. There is a big candle burning next to the table. If it represents the power of the dictator, his candle does not seem to be burning out. Higher up in the picture a big tree has been blown down to the ground while a cloud burst above seems to be so overwhelming and devastating that a hand is shown upraised as if begging it to stop.

This guessing game can be quite embarrassing as nothing is said clearly, but they add up to a painting loaded with meaning or mystery.

No doubt, it is the artist's intention not to say clearly that two and two make four but to juggle up the figures (visual and numerical) in such a way that they could add up to five or six or what you choose it to be.

It is certain that his luminous canvases give visual pleasure with their wide range of treatment from tiny details drawn in pencil to broad washes of liquid paint. The contents too have endless variety, all the way from memories of childhood lived in a village to the painful experience of living under a military dictatorship.

Of course, the harshness of the reality (or even the substantiality of the pleasant memories) is turned into a colourful magical world, half real, half dream, where more is meant than meets the eye.

Such is the work of Quddus Mirza, a big departure from the usual art we get to see here. It is something eminently painterly and also a great deal cerebral, feasting the eye on colourful imagery and teasing the mind into exploring hints and innuendoes. Sometimes it is playfully joyous and at other times grimly meaningful.

Horror!



Appealing hands





Eqbal Mehdi

EQBAL MEHDI

Eqbal Mehdi began his artistic career as a magazine illustrator when he started working for the political magazine "Lail-o-Nahar" at the request of its editor, the late Sibte Hassan, in 1967, at the age of twentyone. Soon he was in great demand and was turning out pen and ink sketches of pretty girls in romantic poses by the hundred for popular magazines like "Akhbar-e-Jahan" and "Subrang Digest".

He developed extraordinary skill in this work of drawing the faces of pin-up girls because the features were perfectly correct, the line was very fine and unfaltering, the stippling technique of shading was meticulous and faultless.

But it was basically commercial work in which the faces were like that of dolls and the style was without the force and emotion and interpretation of the artist which alone can raise a piece of drawing to the level of art.

However, when these drawings are portraits of particular individuals and when the personality of the subject is captured in the drawing, then even the most highbrow art lover cannot help being fascinated by the sheer superbness of the technical skill as in the case of the girl with the turban-like headdress.

Eqbal Mehdi has done an enormous amount of other work but he still loves his line drawings so much that, for his exhibition at Munich in 1984 and at Paris in 1985 and at Washington D. C. in 1990, he took with him mostly these drawings — partly for reasons of convenience in transport. Even his widely acclaimed exhibition of paintings at Karachi in 1987 included a few of these striking pen and ink portraits, while the 1990 exhibition in Karachi consisted entirely of drawings, portraits and figures, some as large as 90 x 40 inches

Painting

Very early, he tried to diversify his work and to build up his reputation as a painter so that it may overshadow his fame as a magazine illustrator. As early as 1969, he held a

Lost in Thought



Portrait Painters

solo exhibition at the Arts Council of Karachi in which a large number of paintings were displayed. More exhibitions of paintings and drawings were held in succeeding years, with the result that he received an endless stream of commissions from civil and military agencies to paint portraits of the dead and the living. Therefore army and air force messes and offices and the War Museum in Rawalpindi are full of portraits of heroes and scenes of war time happenings painted by Eqbal Mehdi.

It is incredible but true that he has painted as many as five hundred portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam all of which are hanging in public buildings within the country and abroad.

Naturally, official portraits of the Father of the Nation, meant for official and ceremonial display, cannot be painted light-heartedly or too colourfully. They have to be serious, sedate and stately, a little dark and imposing, if not actually deterring.

Painting for Pleasure

Loaded with commissioned work as he was, at last in 1987 he found time to paint a number of pictures for his pleasure only. While the commissioned portraits were immediately taken away by the client, these he was able to save specially for a large exhibition which was held in November. 1987 at the Arts Council in Karachi.

This exhibition of forty paintings and four drawings had quite a variety of his work but the bulk of it consisted of portraits of teenage girls, mostly half or full figure studies. and only one a bust.

They were engaging pictures of Pakistani girls in characteristic poses, shyly lowering their heads or averting their faces or giggling to hide their embarrassment or ogling with a disapproving frown. Where they are looking straight, they wear a blank look .

Bold Beauty



EQBAL MEHDI

1946 (Apr. 1) Born at Amroha
1962 Came to Karachi
1966 Started designing covers of Urdu magazine "Lail-o-Nahar" in pen and ink.
1969 First solo exhibition (at Arts Council, Karachi).
1976 For birth centenary celebrations of Quaid-e-Azam made about fifty paintings and drawings, exhibited in Karachi.
1977 For birth centenary of poet Iqbal, made about fifty paintings and drawings, exhibited in Karachi.
1977-94 Ten solo exhibitions in Pakistan (Wah, Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi). One each in Washington D.C., Paris; Munich, Riyadh, Hong Kong.

Perhaps it is their Oriental character that makes them look so diffident and helpless or perhaps that is the way they are taught to present themselves to the world. Only the tall standing girl in white dress in the largest painting of all, stands firmly, putting her best foot forward, literally, and that gives her away as a foreigner.

Many are actually shown sitting slumped forward with their chins resting in their cupped hands, lost in thought or in the melancholy of adolescence.

There is nothing sexy or salacious either in the looks or the poses of the girls nor are they particularly beautiful. It is their innocence and naivete that is presented in the paintings.

Of course the flowery freshness of their faces is well rendered, where the face is shown close up and frontally, as in the case of the girl with Mongolian features, sporting a cream coloured embroidered shawl on her right shoulder. This was the only picture in this exhibition painted as a bust and so the face was large and prominent.

In the case of the life-size portrait of the girl in white, the face naturally gets more space and the artist could take more pains on its details.

Both these girls are fair and their complexions show more variation of tone. The artist has captured the bloom on their youthful faces. In many other cases, the face is neither prominent nor is it painted in great detail. Usually, one flesh tint is used to paint the whole face, changing from light to dark, where necessary, but not from one hue to another.

Peering into the Future





Woman in White

It may be mentioned here that with his exploitation of strong light and darkness, Eqbal never uses the black colour but creates his dark tones with Prussian blue, burnt umber and raw sienna. It is for this reason that the dark areas also remain transparent, and never become dull, lifeless and inert.

His fondness for white dresses also is obvious from the range of his paintings and it is amazing how he can create the effect of milky whiteness by using a large number of colours in the shadows, such as cerulean blue, terreverte (green) and others. This feature of his work is noticeable in many paintings but specially in the lifesize picture of the girl in white wearing a turban-like head-dress. Except for her scarlet necklace, all her ensemble, from head to foot, is white and yet so many colours have been used to produce this milky effect.

Portraits of Men

Of course, Eqbal Mehdi has painted hundreds of portraits of men but those were commissioned portraits of the great. In his exhibition of 1987, he also put up three pictures of common men, two Baloch men, with their huge turbans and a Punjabi peasant. One Baloch is a grand old man sitting with his little grandson. The age of each appears distinctly on their faces, as also the gravity of the old man and the innocence of the young one. The other Baloch is a young warrior, fully armed. His face shows confidence and a certain amount of amusement. In both cases the folds of the turbans and the white dresses have been excellently rendered.

Eqbal Mehdi will scale the heights of portrait painting by painting portraits of common men and women whose stirring experiences of life are writ large on their faces, unlike the portraits of the teenage girls whose tablet of life is still a blank. Commissioned portraits restrict the freedom of the artist because the client expects the picture to be idealized. Also one feels that in his paintings, more detailed study is required of the face and more importance needs to be given to it rather than to the dress. Great portraits have to be character studies, which give insight into the soul of the subject.

Magnificent Mount



SAEED AKHTAR



Saeed Akhtar

When Pakistan Day was celebrated in Rawalpindi on 23 March, 1988 the thick crowd gathered to witness the military parade and other events was astonished to see at the far end of the ground a colossal portrait of the Quaid-e-Azam rising 61 feet into the sky and dominating the whole scene. This magnum opus was the work of Saeed Akhtar, a leading portrait painter of Pakistan. He had toiled at it for two years and more than the painting, the mechanics of putting together 150 pieces of 4 x 4 ft. hardboard had tested the skill and ingenuity of the artist and the many technicians working on the project.

Though not exactly a work of fine art, it was a challenging assignment which came to Saeed Akhtar because of the unique reputation he had built up during the last quarter of a century that he had been active, after obtaining his diploma in fine art from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1964.

The first important commissioned work he did was in 1969 to paint portraits of the shaheeds (martyrs) for the Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul. By 1970 many of his portraits were hanging in the War Museum at Rawalpindi. The demand for his work continues in army circles.

In 1974 he was commissioned to paint portraits of the heads of state of Muslim countries for the Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore.

Another series of the same ceremonial portraits that he has been constantly commissioned to paint are those of the Quaid-e-Azam. The largest of these hangs high proudly in the National Assembly building behind the seat of the Speaker.

He also got a chance to paint living personages from life when in the early 70s he was invited to paint the portrait of Prime Minister Z.A.Bhutto and other high dignitaries and leaders.

However, these official, ceremonial portraits were considered by him to be commercial work. He never puts up these in his exhibitions and none that he does from photographs for official or private clients who often want portraits of deceased elders or personages of the past. He thinks a photograph catches only one flashing moment in the life of a person whereas a person sitting for his portrait before a painter is like an open book. The lively expression and changing moods over a period of time are different from the blank stare with which a person faces the click of the camera.

Budding Beauty



He has painted for pleasure or on commission scores of portraits of men whose faces or personalities attracted him and many more women, beautiful women, as Bevan Petman did. He does not idealize them so much as the elder painter, except in certain cases. It all depends on how he looks at them - detachedly or admiringly or lovingly. His detached truthfulness can be cruel for some sitters while his bewitchment invests the subject with a halo of charm, as can be seen from the portraits on the next page.

He does not and cannot play with many colours in the same painting as he is partially colour blind. He has overcome this handicap by painting in monochrome and using all the tones and shades of a single colour to depict the image. Quite often he paints in sepia.

Although he is a sculptor he does not seem to emphasize the third dimension or the structure of the figure. He is certainly reported to have said, "Shakir Ali was my teacher, mentor and inspiration. I have learned to create volumes between spaces by watching Shakir Ali work". Volume is noticeable more in the head than in the rest of the figure. His figures are by no means ponderous. The reason is that he paints the portraits in soft light. So the shadows are subdued and the modelling minimum.

In fact his portraits have a light, airy and buoyant look because of the above and because of the flowing diaphanous dresses they wear, — white, beige, yellow, light green or blue. The shading off and trailing off fringes, in bust or three-quarters portraits, makes them sail in space.

There is nothing sketchy, rough or fuzzy in the drawing of the contour and features nor is there any impulsive brush work in laying on the paint.

His bigger than life size portraits won him the first prize in painting at the National Exhibitions of 1982 and 1984.

It is obvious that he loves to work in this bold and expansive style though there is no lack of portraits by him which are smaller and minutely finished. While the portrait that won him a prize in the 1982 National Exhibition showed the full figure of a woman, in the Exhibition, held in January, 1988, but called "The First Art Biennale of Pakistan '87", he exhibited a portrait showing a face only enlarged to almost twice its natural size. The making of such faces is the latest trend in his work.

He does not take liberties with the drawing of the head and the face but the painting part is lightly dashed off, either in almost flat thin colours or, sometimes, thick dark strokes, boldly and sweepingly applied, with very little variation.

The range of his colours is severely restricted. He is very fond of painting the whole picture in sepia and leaving large areas of the canvas blank Or, he likes to paint in monochrome, using yellow and brown or blue and purple, but again with very little colour variation. Obviously, he does not play with a number of colours because of his disability.

Both in the drawing and the painting, there is severe simplification. There is no emotional gesturing, no multiple random strokes of the brush and no romantic fuzziness. There is restraint and control and clarity.

Not all parts of the portrait are equally finished. The eyes are always fully worked, because the entire character of the person beams from the eyes. The outline of the face is lightly suggested and so are the nose and the lips. The hands and the feet are often treated a little sketchily. The artist believes that if every detail was fully finished, the picture would become too tight and hard.

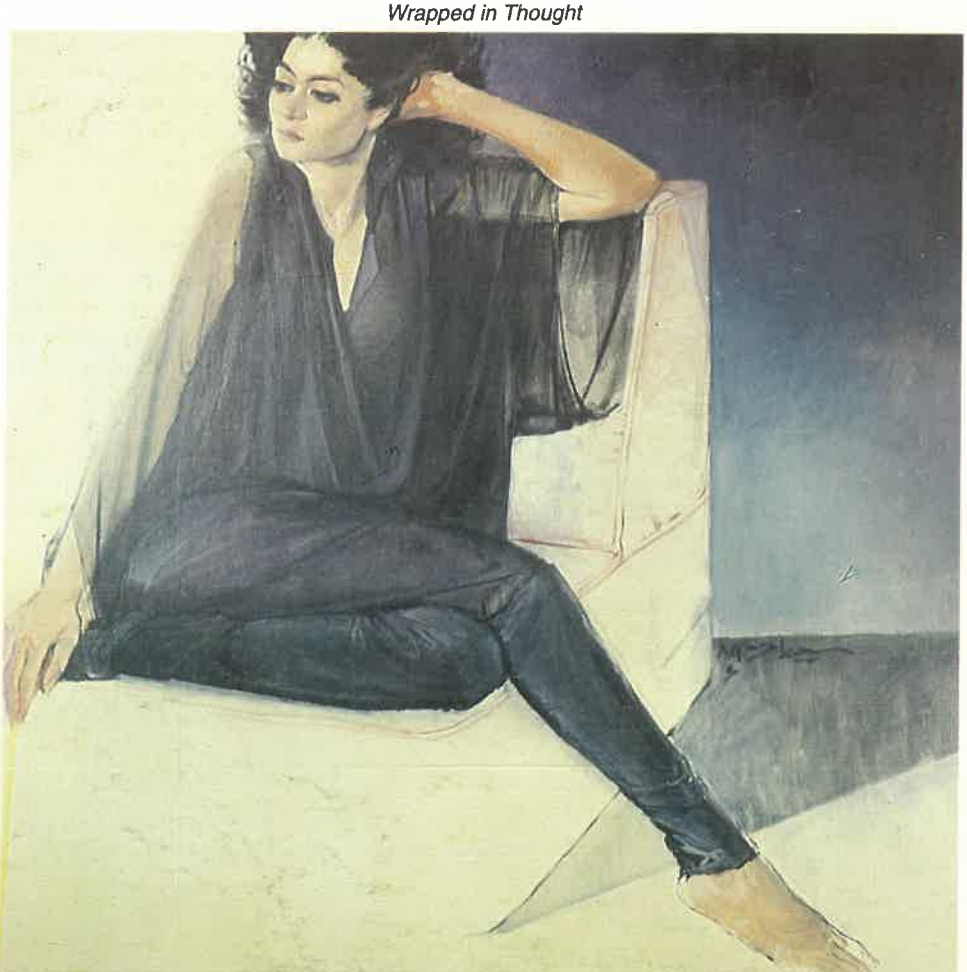


Lady of the House

Unconcerned



Wrapped in Thought



His whole effort is to catch the personality of the model. He says he never paints from photographs except for commercial work which he never displays because he thinks the photograph catches only a moment in the life of the model while in a painting the effort is to capture the whole life and personality. For one moment, the model can dissemble and pretend to be something different from what he or she is. But when the same model is sitting before the artist for hours, the real personality is exposed. The artist can feel it and unconsciously capture it.

Saeed Akhtar pointed at a portrait of a girl named Suhaila that he had recently painted. He spontaneously used a lot of yellow colour in it and later came to know that yellow was her favourite colour. He also vaguely indicated the sun in the background and came to know later that it was her zodiac sign. The upright commanding posture of the girl revealed that she was the descendant of Sardars and tribal lords. Thus, the total personality of the model emerges before the eyes of the artist when he is painting the person from life.

Shehla





Chieftain's Daughter

The success of Saeed Akhtar lies in catching the personality of the model in the most natural and relaxed pose. The fact that he achieves this with the minimum of lines and colours shows his perfect command over technique. He says that he believes what Shakir Ali once observed, that "An artist is known more by what he omits than what he paints."

A comparison with our other leading portrait painters may help to particularize the style of Saeed Akhtar. When he graduated in 1964, three portrait painters were already well established, though they did not paint portraits after 1980. These are Anna Molka Ahmed, Khalid Iqbal and Gulgee. The first affected a very impetuous stroke-work style and used a multiplicity of colours. specially complementary or contrasting colours, instead of using light and dark shades of the same colour to show light and shadow. Gulgee lays on the paint freely but not impulsively, in his portraits. He tries to catch the varying tones of the different angles and planes of the face. For this he gently daubs closely related tones and colours, as if with a powder puff. He avoids a finished look and strives to keep the colour application loose. Khalid Iqbal does not employ either bold strokes or daubs and patches when painting. He does not take liberties with the colour. Using the one local colour, he slightly varies the tone for modelling. The paint application is or rather was, fairly smooth (as he no longer paints portraits) and the brush strokes were not prominent. A fourth younger portrait painter who is most active in this field now, is Eqbal Mehdi. He makes full use of play of light on the face and figure, lavishes attention on the dress, and makes his work altogether more finished.

A. S. NAGI



A. S. Nagi

Ahmad Sayeed Nagi's career as an artist spans more than half a century and the art gallery he has set up in his Karachi home shows the wide range of his work. He has never held an exhibition.

However, he is primarily a portrait painter and especially a painter of exotic subjects like snake charmers, fishermen, gypsies, old farmers, Kafiristan girls, other hill girls, wandering minstrels and all such persons in colourful and uncommon dresses. Even some society girls whose portraits he painted, were dressed and posed as peasant girls with a sickle in hand. Even his daughter is painted as a hill girl, selling apples, with mountains in the background.

He never received any formal training at any art institution but his natural talent received encouragement under the guidance of a number of teachers, Chief among these was the well-known portrait painter of Nagi's home town of Amritsar, S. G. Thakur Singh, under whom he worked as a pupil in the 30s. That was the strongest formative influence on his work and the result is that his style has remained extremely academic and old-fashioned even after he has been painting for more than fifty years. In the early fifties, he got an opportunity to go and study in Paris but fell ill there and had to return after three or four months. However, one portrait that he painted there, of the famous clown Pierrot is completely different from all his other work.

In this portrait the bony structure of the face and the head is clearly brought out like a piece of sculpture, whereas in his portrait of his daughter as an apple seller the face is all one smooth surface like an egg. Almost the same is the case with his portrait of his wife, although there are in this case a few more shadows under the eyes and nose and lips and on one side of the face. But there is no attempt to bring out the structure of the face or to show the different facets and varying tones of light and colour. Everything is shown in such a soft diffused light that no sharply differentiated planes or facets are visible and only gently curving surfaces meet the eye everywhere. Even the solidity and third dimension is not clearly brought out by making one side of the face dark. Moreover, all the faces are completely stolid and expressionless as if they were masks. There is this exception, however, that the eyes are very much alive and Nagi prides himself on painting eyes. But the eyes of the women in almost every case are heavily made up and mascaraed.

Surprisingly, one of his earliest portraits, painted before Independence, is better than all these later portraits. This is the portrait of a Buddhist hill girl, wearing a cap with plumes and a necklace of thick beads at the lower end of which is a big oblong locket or amulet case. Apart from the exotic dress, for which Nagi has a weakness, what is noteworthy is the lively expression on the smiling face. There is also some attempt to model the face and bring out its solidity by placing shadows at the right places. There is also considerable variation of tone and even of colour by using some blue in the shadows. The transitions from tone to tone are smooth, as always in Nagi, but there is more variation and some suggestion of the changing planes and facets of the face. Of course, there is never any free brushwork and the colours are smoothly mixed and mingled. The difference between the painting of this Buddhist girl and others will become clear if one compares this with the portrait of his daughter holding a huge bunch of gladiola flowers. The treatment of the face is almost flat and the application of colour smooth like enamel, with no variation of tone or colour.

Nudes

Nagi has painted a large number of nudes. Most of them are painted in the same monotonous even-handed manner. The legs and arms look wooden. There is neither any anatomical study nor any play of light. Only the charm of the skin is emphasized by using bright flesh tints, with hardly a shadow anywhere. The breasts and hips are always exaggerated to give a sensual look to the painting. The faces are like dolls or masks, stolid and expressionless.

A. S. NAGI

1916 (Feb. 2)	*Born, Amritsar, India.*
1930	*Passed High School*
1932	*Passed F.A. from M.A.O. College, Amritsar Learned painting from S.G. Thakur Singh, Amritsar*
1934	*Awarded Bronze Medal for oil painting in All-India Fine Art Exhibition, Delhi. Studied at Ukil Art Academy, Delhi. Helped Bhoop Singh to paint murals in Birla Mandir, New Delhi.*
1944	*Won Ist Prize for poster in All-India competition on subject "Save me from Jap Rats". Mentioned in Encyclopedia of World Art, Vol. X. Pl. 418.*
1991	*Awarded President's "Pride of Performance" Medal.*

Lady from Ladakh





Girl with Ear-rings



Right out of Moenjodaro

Only where play of light on the figure is shown does the picture come alive. Such is the case with one splendid nude showing a woman sitting upright like a Buddha and with the same chignon of hair on the top of the head as Buddha had. A light is shown beautifully falling from behind on the face and the figure. The deeply absorbed expression on the face also helps to give character and distinction to the subject. This is one of his outstanding paintings.

Landscapes

Nagi has also painted some landscapes. Quite a poor example is his "Sunset at Murree" in which a clump of tall pines is shown on the left, roof tops on a sloping hill in the foreground; hills on the low horizon and the sky with the setting sun above. The noble pine trees have been feebly rendered in rudimentary symbols and signs. The orange sky with mauve clouds is slightly better.

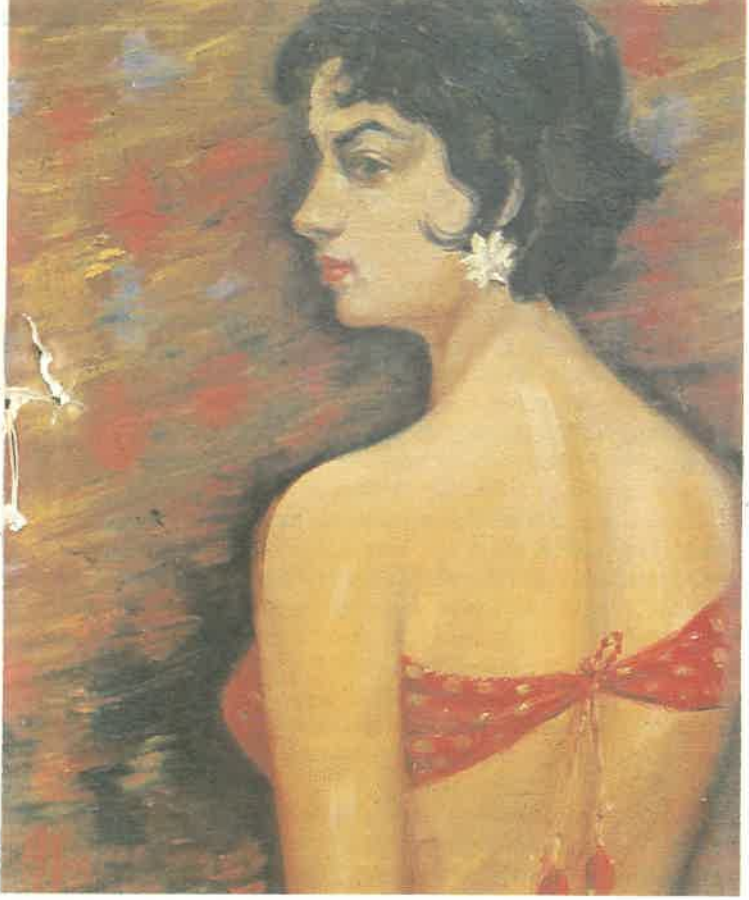
In Balochistan Landscape, a high rampart of mountains is shown on the horizon but their ruggedness has not been brought out. The broad plain in the foreground is equally blank and featureless except for two tents and a flock of sheep. It all looks so utterly bleak and depressing and dark, which may perhaps be true to life of a winter scene in Balochistan .

Much more attractive is Poppy Fields in the Northern Areas, in which a wide expanse of poppy fields is shown in the main picture, with blue hills on the horizon in the distance and a cottage on the right nestling among trees. The flowers are indicated individually in the foreground and are merged into an overall tone in the middle distance. At the far end the blue hills are vaguely shown, which is justified by the distance.

Still better are his watery landscapes and seascapes in oils because he has more freedom in depicting the water and the clouds in the sky as he likes. In Ravi Bridge, the long bridge is shown fading away in the distance and its reflections falling in the water. The waves of the water in the foreground are fairly well rendered and the clouds in the sky are painted with much freedom and flair. The reflections of these in the water turn

The Beach at Karachi





Giving a Cold Shoulder



A Lovable Load

the picture very colourful. The swirling colours of the sky and the waters remind one vaguely of the seascapes of Turner.

Perhaps the best picture is the seascape Karachi Seaside. Although the formation of the waves has nowhere been indicated well, even in the foreground, still he manages to convey a general impression of the sea and its waves and the changing colours as the water recedes towards the horizon. The figures of bathers playing in the centre foreground bring the picture to life and are aptly indicated.



A Girl from the Hills





thar Jamal

ATHAR JAMAL

Portrait painting is the most popular art form and therefore there has never been a lack of good portrait painters in Pakistan. Today we have such outstanding ones as Eqbal Mehdi of Karachi and Saeed Akhtar of Lahore, the former painting mostly charming teenagers of the middle class and the latter beautiful sophisticated women. Gulgee was a painters of kings, queens, princes and princesses but after 1968 he has been making their portraits in stone mosaic. In the past we had such painters as S. H. Askari, Mirza Sajjad and Bevan Petman who painted numerous official ceremonial portraits of distinguished personages, some of the living and mostly of the dead. Petman excelled in painting idealized portraits of beautiful women and he used a comparatively modern style and modern palette. These three were very prolific but a few excellent portraits were also painted by the late Iftikhar Ali Khan of Karachi in the 50s and by Mahmud Hasan Rumi of Lahore in the 50s and 60s (the latter in water colour and the former in oils).

It is no reflection on these distinguished artists but the fact is that none of them has painted portraits of the poor common people. No doubt portraits of ordinary humble men and women are not portraits in the same sense in which those of the rich or powerful or otherwise distinguished personages because in the former case there is no confrontation between two personalities, that of the artist and the model, which creates all the excitement and drama in a truly impressive painting. The personality of these models, who may in such cases be paid to sit, is completely overpowered by that of the artist and the soul of the former cannot shine forth; only the exterior can be captured. This is not to deny that sometimes even a beggar or a shepherd or a gypsy may have a remarkable character face which is like an open book full of the strangest experiences. But rarely will he or she be able to face up to the artist as an equal or a superior and therefore the "mana" or magic of his personality will be smothered by that of the artist.

But great portrait painters like Rembrandt still painted the poor because they were fascinated by the basic humanity of such models and tried to capture it in paint. His "Old Woman cutting her Nails" is dingily dressed and does not care to look ingratiating for the benefit of the artist, but her intrinsic humanity, as a daughter of Eve different from all others, shines forth unmistakably.

On another level, there are the portraits of Degas who was fond of painting such people as washer-women, jockeys, and dancers. Often he avoided the embarrassing encounter with his inferior subjects by painting from photographs.

Labourer girls from Tharparkar





Therefore, Athar Jamal may be said to have hit a rich vein of gold when he turned his attention to painting portraits of the common people. He was still a student of the final year at the Karachi School of Art when his "Portrait of a Pathan" was accepted for inclusion in the National Art Exhibition of 1984. It was a good attempt to catch the natural dignity and distinct individuality of an ordinary man.

He adopted the water colour medium and used it with great skill to paint scenes of daily life and common people, what is called genre painting. For example, in the First Pakistan Art Biennale 1987, he entered a painting of an old man with a big bag collecting litter and waste paper to sell. In his first solo exhibition of 1987, there was an excellent painting of an old water carrier carrying on his back a sheep skin full of water. In his second exhibition of 1989, there were paintings of a woman cooking or of a wandering minstrel singing to the accompaniment of iron tongs. He also painted many street scenes, showing houses and shops, in poor localities.

Naturally, such work had a very wide appeal and he could hardly paint fast enough to meet the demand. Then some other young artists also started painting the same subjects in water colour, like Shireen Syed and Masroor Haider who held a joint exhibition in May, 1989. The former painted mostly houses and street scenes and boat scenes while the latter took for his subject the life of the people, such as Fruit Sellers, Cage Makers, Tea Stalls and also some figure studies of men and women but no close-ups of faces, which calls for greater skill.

A very senior distinguished architect (M. A. Ahad), who had been painting quietly for a long time, came out into the open by holding his first solo exhibition of water colour landscapes but when he held his second solo show in March, 1987, he put up a large number of water colour paintings of common people, like a cobbler, a fisherman a potter, a garlic seller, a grain seller and he like.

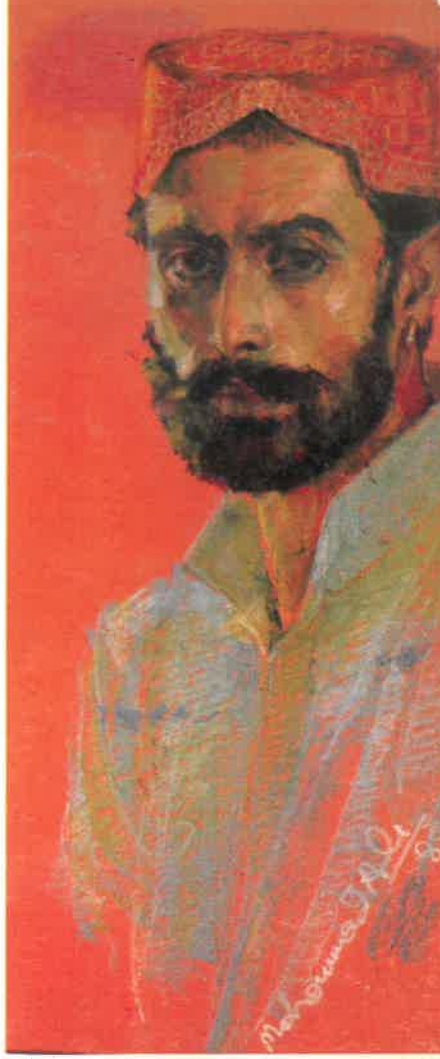
It will be recalled that in the 19th century, our miniature painters had started turning out a large number of small tempera paintings of people of different trades, called "Firka Paintings". (Firka or firqa means group or class.) These were specially done for the English clientele and they were descriptive and documentary rather than artistic. The colouring was mostly flat, smooth and even.

Ahad's style is much more charming and modern, with minute colour variations and cautious brushwork. But it is not the ordinary water colour technique because he does not use the common water colour paper but some other tinted and absorbent paper on which broad washes or light sweeps of the brush are not possible. Rather Ahad paints or at any rate, finishes with short choppy strokes and tiny dabs and pats of colour, creating an agreeable spotty effect. Also, his colours are not transparent, as in water colour, but opaque because he uses them a little thick and also freely uses tempera paint, especially to give the highlights. Masroor Haider's paintings of people are more truly in the water colour tradition but again he is too literal, meticulous and restrained. There is no adventurousness in the use of colours nor freedom of brushwork. It is also obvious from some of the paintings that they are done from photographs, because some extraneous part of a figure is introduced into the picture, which could have been easily eliminated if the composition was original.

A comparison of Athar Jamal's work with these examples shows that he has painted from life and uses the true water colour technique in which the colours remain transparent. Clean clear successive washes are applied with free brush strokes.

He is also the only one to have painted portraits of poor peasant men and women and other common people. He has specially been attracted by the denizens of Tharparkar, with their distinct physiognomy, expressive faces and colourful dress and jewellery.

He has not only excellent command of the water colour medium but uncanny skill in quickly catching a resemblance on paper. One can see from numerous portraits that he has painted that they are true to life because the faces are not generalized but each has a personality.



Sindhi youth

What raises his work above the common run of water colour studies is the sensitive and skilful rendering of light effects on the face and the figure. It not only brings out the third dimension and the solidity of the face or figure but by the equal distribution of the light from one single source, holds together the image and gives it unity. The subtle indication of the shadows from the lightest to the darkest is very apt. and artful. He even catches the light reflected from one area to the other.

Altogether, his feel for the basic humanity of his humble subjects, his skilful figure drawing and portraiture, his command over the water colour medium and his eye for light effects makes his figure studies and his portraits of the common people most creditable creations that have become deservedly popular.

Turbaned Pathan



A Khan from the Frontier



Sindhi Peasant



JAMIL NAQSH



Jamil Naqsh

Jamil Naqsh was brought up in the atmosphere of old-world refinement and culture cultivated by the economically independent landlords of U.P. (India) of whom his father Abdul Basit was one. Leisurely pursuits, open-house hospitality, respect for personal and social traditions (waza-daari), shikar and even some dabbling in the arts, especially poetry, music and painting, were a way of life.

These old values are ingrained in Jamil Naqsh though he rebelled and left his life of comfort to seek his fortune and brave untold hardships on coming to Pakistan. Though he may not have learnt miniature painting from his father, he must have acquired a taste and an urge to paint from him. When he joined the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, he chose miniature painting as his subject of study. In Haji Sharif he found a dedicated teacher who passed on his inheritance of generations of this art to his promising pupil.

To the utter disappointment of his teacher Jamil felt that in these two years (1953-54) he had gained initiation into the technique of the miniature and decided that it was now for him to use it in his own way, without the need to complete the course and pass the examination.

It is important to mention that while Jamil was at Mayo School, Shakir Ali was teaching painting and introducing the students to the latest Cubist and Abstract styles that he had learnt during his long stay in Europe. His influence was decisive in shaping the work of the young artists of Lahore and though Jamil was not his student, he could not remain unaffected. Shakir Ali himself was painting very much in the style of Braque in those early days and the earliest paintings of Jamil that this writer has seen, dating back to 1961, are one still life (a table cluttered with cups, a newspaper and much else) exactly in the style of Braque. The other shows two women riding on a donkey, rendered with the Cubist linear space divisions.

Very soon however Jamil had found his metier and that was female nudes. A 1962 painting shows a tall girl in the radiance of youth, sitting frontally, looking down demurely and toying with her long tresses. An old colour slide helps in recalling that the figure is lightly and glancingly outlined with the edge of the palette knife. The pale yellow skin colour of the fair model is just a little shaded here and there to indicate volume.

The shading (blue-green in the middle tones and light red in shadows) is so light that the third dimension is not much emphasised. The play of light from top right adds to the ethereal and airy quality of the picture. The figure drawing is impeccable and there is a glimpse of Shakir Ali in the way the narrow waist spreads and joins the pelvis. Even in this very early work one can see that he slightly exaggerates the thighs towards heaviness, presaging his future. style.

With mastery comes growing confidence and the temptation to take liberties. In a 1963 painting a young girl is shown raising up her shirt to reveal all her beauty. It is very roughly executed and even the face is a little awry. Many other paintings of '63, '64, '65 show the same slapdash treatment and a '65 blue painting printed in "Seep" Quarterly, (bust of two women) shows much greater distortion (round face, long straight nose, very long neck, extremely high breasts, strangely bunched up fingers).

By 1964 the famous pigeon had made its appearance and even the by now familiar gesture of an upraised hand holding a pigeon close to the face.

By 1966 he had developed a stylized face with wide open staring eyes, long straight nose, flat head and very broad expressionless face.

When he painted the sitting figure (from the beginning, only upto the thighs), he began elongating it, especially the neck and making the fingers of the upraised hand holding the pigeon, quite strangely tapering to a point. There was no rough treatment in this series but quite evenly textured surface with variations of colour from light to dark from one side to the other. The third dimension again was not emphasized and the pictures were almost flat.

Figure Painters

JAMIL NAQSH

1938	*Born at Kerana (India)*
1953-54	*Studied miniature painting in Mayo School of Art, Lahore, but did not complete course.*
1961	*First solo exhibition in Karachi.*
1984	*Shakir Ali Award given by Pakistan National Council of the Arts.*
1989	*Pride of Performance Award given by Government of Pakistan.*

In his May'71 exhibition he put up paintings in which the sitting female figures were not only thinner and longer but lacking in feminine appeal and even corporeality. Many of these had stiffly averted faces in profile, deliberately shorn of appeal.

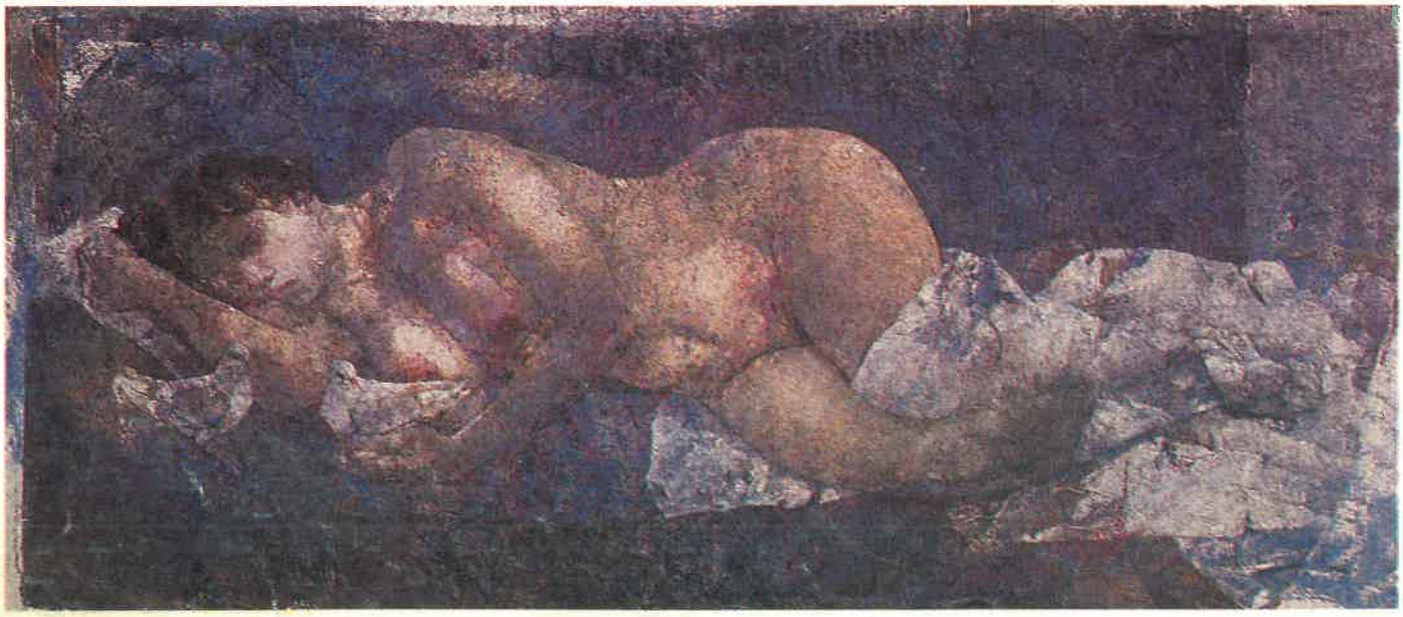
However, even in this exhibition there was one painting of a quite buxon nude girl lying face to the viewer, head resting on an upraised arm, knees bent back. There is no distortion or stylization here but tenderly and faithfully rendered female anatomy, emphasizing all its corporeality and bodily charm by appropriately placed lights and shadows. Even the look in the typically round face is soft and kindly, which is rare in Jamil.

The reclining nude on this page is almost in the same pose but has been deliberately made hazy in regard for tender sensibilities but another almost similar painting done in 1994 in the collection of Mr. Khalil Ahmed shows the distance Jamil Naqsh has travelled since 1971. There is greater command of the female anatomy and by just a little exaggeration, the curvaceous lying figure is made doubly alluring. There is never any impulsive stroke work in Jamil but rather classical clarity and restraint. Still, the rendering of the figure's rise and fall, dip and swell is such that it makes it quiveringly alive. The colouring is only slightly varied and shaded and yet the figure has weight and volume. The subdued play of light is shown by using yellow in the lighted and blue in the shadowed areas, with just a few highlights. The flesh tint of the skin has the freshness and transparency of a healthy and youthful body but Jamil sedulously avoids making the surface enamel smooth, which would make it inert and lifeless like furniture. Rather, he breaks the smoothness with very small slanting brush strokes of many related colours and that creates an attractive textural effect. This is much more natural and appealing than the uniformly rosy look of a heavily made up face.

To go back to the 70s which were under discussion above, around 1975 he painted a self-portrait and some faces in which the rigid drawing and bright colours of Jain painting were prominent. The miniatures of the Jain School are much admired by Jamil So in some paintings he used the same flaming red backgroud, and also very bright blue and yellow, mostly flat.

In 1980 onward he made many small and large paintings in miniature style using a fine ball point pen and water colour, depicting figures in may bewildering Tantric erotic poses. The olden miniature quality was imparted also by much naqqashi or traditional ornamentation in foreground flooring and the background setting. The female figures in these miniature style paintings were not stiffly diagrammatic but alive. Their corporeality was emphasised by their slightly plump figures and especially the under-belly.

The Sleeping Beauty





Part concealed, part revealed.

A picture that breathes the air of peace and tranquillity is that of Mira Bai, the Rajput princess turned mystic poetess, shown sitting nude in a meditative pose, with a white pigeon on one shoulder. It is done in sepia oil colour used thinly and delicately on paper.

Around 1980 also he varied the theme of nude and pigeon by painting the nude and horse. Many of these were painted small in miniature style. For example, there is a 1987 picture showing a nude sitting on a horse,both looking backward. This difficult pose has been well drawn. The pupil- less eyes of the woman add to the sculpturesque quality of the figure. This is all done in sepia water colour with a zero-zero brush.

He has also made eight or ten fairly large oil paintings on paper showing a nude female standing beside a horse. Each has a different overall colour tone - reddish, bluish, yellowish, always much subdued, darkened here and there and textured with small brush strokes.

It may be mentioned that since 1980 Jamil Naqsh has been painting mostly in oil on paper. This means use of thinner paint and none of that dense and multicoloured stippling which he did on canvas, creating a rich saturated effect as of carpets (because many of them have a reddish or purplish tonality). Those done on paper have a lighter touch and thinner texture but are not lacking in any of the cunning in figure drawing and colour application found in his other work.

During the last thirtyfive years that he has been painting, Jamil has created an immense body of work, with single-minded devotion and the life style of a recluse. It is impossible to comprehend in one small chapter the variety and volume of his work, ranging from Jain style small miniatures to mural size paintings–like a twelve foot long painting showing a sitting nude woman with arms widespread, and the eight foot long calligraphic panel written in Maghrebi Kufic.

One can only sum up by saying that he has an uncanny command of the female human anatomy and the rare ability to make it palpable and substantial with flesh and blood; also the power to capture the bloom of the skin with all the variations of light and colour. There is irresistable charm and allure in his nudes but they are never erotic or provoking because of the stolid looks, the statuesque poses and the matter-of-fact rendering of what could be exaggerated and made exciting.

A whole chapter is necessary to describe the progress he has made in the painting of pigeons. In the beginning they were too stiff and wooden. Then he made the outspread wings as a series of spikes as in heraldic designs of eagles. But now he is painting white angelic birds in all their natural grace and beauty, fluffy, cuddly bundles of feathers whose warmth and softness is almost tactile.

Reclining Nude (organic abstraction) 3 X 5 ft. (Courtesy of owner, Mrs. Mehr Hussain).



BASHIR MIRZA

Bashir Mirza emerged in the art world with a solo exhibitions of angry drawings voicing protest against oppressors. The show was held in June, 1963, at Karachi, at the residence of the Nigerian ambassador. The drawings were done with thick black and red markers and showed grimacing, gesticulating figures with strong contrasts of black and white. The good understanding of figure drawing and the ability to bend it in all shapes and also to show strong emotions through facial expressions and dark shading, did not fail to impress the public.

While in this first exhibition, Bashir was tilting at unknown enemies, he found a suitable subject to express his rage and indignation when he put up an exhibition in April, 1966, after the September, 1965 war with India. Many of the paintings were done with Flowmaster or marker in a limited range of colours and fifteen drawings in pen and ink. The ravages of war and the crippled figures and torn limbs of men were depicted powerfully with deep dark shading.

In the same year he produced more subtle work done with a fine pen in the form of a portfolio of face studies entitled "Portrait of Pakistan". Anyone could draw these faces of men and women but what made them striking was the deep dark shadows that brought into full relief the solidity and structure of the face and the head. The lines were drawn and redrawn with much gusto and flourish and yet they were placed correctly to describe the features and the total structure.

Moving over into the realm of colour, Bashir Mirza started painting abstract compositions in 1967 made up of large patches of colour that were suggestive of vegetation and sometimes of landscape.

Venturing further in the same direction, he painted a series of abstract paintings in the form of circles or squares that filled the whole canvas and were subdivided into areas. Within these areas, there was free brushwork. So he called the series "Compromise".

Obviously, these carefully calculated geometrical paintings did not suit the impetuous temperament of the artist. In 1969 he again went back to his favourite medium of drawing and his favourite subject of the nude human figure. All the drawings showed deep frustration gnawing at the heart of the artist and also his obsession with sex expressed in the form of male and female figures in all sorts of weird postures, dishevelled tresses and clutching bony hands.

After a couple of years of wanderings in Germany he came back and put up in Dec. '71 an exhibition of paintings that he called "The Lonely Girl Series". They were square compositions in which a female figure was shown almost in outline, like a cutout, painted flat in deep rich green or blue or brown, with just a little modelling of the limbs and shading at the edges. Statuesque poses, a stony stare, long tresses and billowing drapery with bold patterns, made the paintings very striking. The well-formed voluptuous female figure was in some cases nude and in others very scantily covered. It was a dramatic characterization with very bold striking colouring. The design quality of the composition was very prominent.

Not so impressive but different and distinctive in their own way was the next series that he did in 1978, called The Flower Girl Series. These were also square compositions in which only the head or bust of a girl was shown in one lower corner of the canvas and small or large flowers painted together with it, often leaving much of the canvas blank.

In 1980 he painted another interesting series in which the subjects of miniature paintings were used in easel size painting, like a woman sitting on a divan with an attendant holding a mirror, but the female types were rustic and the colouring was flat and dark, reminiscent of Gaugin and Amrita Sher-Gil.



Bashir Mirza – self portrait

BASHIR MIRZA

1941	*Born at Amritsar (India)*
1947	*Migrated to Pakistan.*
1958-62	*Earned Diploma in Design from National College of Art, Lahore.*
1965	*First solo exhibition (at residence of Nigerian Ambassador in Karachi).*
1965	*Joined in setting up the first private art gallery in Karachi called "The Gallery".*
1967	*Published portfolio of pen drawings. "Portraits of Pakistan".*
1969-71	*Spent in Germany.*
1971 (Dec.)	*Exhibition of "Lonely Girl" series of paintings in Karachi.*
1973	*Exhibition "Song of Colour" series, purely abstract.*
1989	*Solo exhibition, "People of Pakistan", huge canvases, four being portraits and rest enlargements of earlier drawings.*
1991	*Solo show at Karachi marking his 50th birthday.*



Roughly rendered face (acrylic).

Finely drawn figure (pen and ink).



After painting just a few of these two series, the work of Bashir Mirza tapers off. A few paintings that he called "Sounds from a Distant Planet" were little more than play of colours and perhaps represented a relaxation, if not a relapse.

He did little painting after starting an ad agency in 1982. However, in 1984, he collaborated with Masud Kohari, the ceramist, in painting a big mural on square glazed tiles. Against the background of a wall covered with plain coloured glazed tiles, there were vertical or horizontal panels of pictured tiles, which had been painted with ceramic pigments and then fired. The medium was new for Bashir Mirza and most of the work was crude but one or two were quite attractive.

Preoccupied as he was with advertising business he surfaced again as a painter in early 1989 when he enlarged and transferred into paintings those pen and ink sketches that he had published in 1966 under the title of "Portraits of Pakistan". These pictures of the common men and women of Pakistan he thought would be timely for display during the regime of the Pakistan People's Party government. The small sketches done in fine lines of the pen were enlarged to 8x4 feet canvases and painted very boldly in oils.

In addition to these enlargements or rather reinterpretations were some new pictures in the form of portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam and of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Begum Nusrat Bhutto. The last was shown downcast and bleeding after facing the baton charges of the police as part of her struggle against a dictatorial regime. Although the picture was so large (all were 8 x 4 feet), there were no details because it was obviously done from some photograph or even some newspaper picture. The portrait of the Quaid made him look like a school boy. The portrait of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was too much dolled up and decorated with highlights and flattering touches to have much force of character in it. It was obvious that Bashir was no portrait painter. He was at his best in freely painting the faces of unknown men and women in which likeness was of no importance and play of light and shade on the structure of the face was everything. Those face studies were the best part of the exhibition although the aim of the artist was to display the portrait of the Prime Minister and her mother.

The portraits of the above three political leaders and the three popular poets Faiz, Faraz and Jalib, naturally had to be realistic enough to be recognised, while the other paintings were based on his pen and ink sketches called "People of Pakistan" and they were all minutely realistic though with plenty of flourishes of the pen in drawing of hair and in shading.

Homage to Souza

Painting still more faces is exactly what he did, leaving portraiture aside and within a few months he put up another exhibition of 35 paintings done in acrylic, at Karachi .

These were much smaller than the paintings in the previous show but the medium was different and the style was still more different.

The December, 1989 exhibition he called "Homage to Souza", who had held an exhibition at Karachi in January, 1989. Fascinated by that famous Indian artist, he threw realism overboard and though he did not distort, he indulged in exaggeration to the extent of grotesqueness in some cases. Perhaps it was the swiftness and impetuosity imposed by the quick-drying medium of acrylic paint or was it the exhibitionism motivated by the desire to prove that the sap of artistic creativity had not dried in his veins during the seventeen years that he had been almost inactive as an artist (from the 1972 exhibition entitled "Songs in Colour" to the early 1989 exhibition called "People of Pakistan").

Whatever the reason, he became bold and brash with a vengeance, using a very thick brush to paint the face roughly and ruggedly in a number of straight swift strokes that demolished all gentle curves. The enclosed area also was filled with the deepest bright of blue and orange and yellow and green.

With still greater abandon and daredevilry, he painted some faces by inflicting with a thick brush, gashes and stripes and bands of colour, rather many colours, which in one case looked like a head in coloured bandage.

Where his frenzy slowed down, there were also some normal faces and busts and half figures in which the freedom he takes is just enough to be engaging but faithful enough to be plausible. He continued this style in the exhibitions he put up in 1991 and 1994 but the latest is that he is painting again the "Lonely Girl" series of 1971, with slight changes because, he says, the public wants it.... and it sells

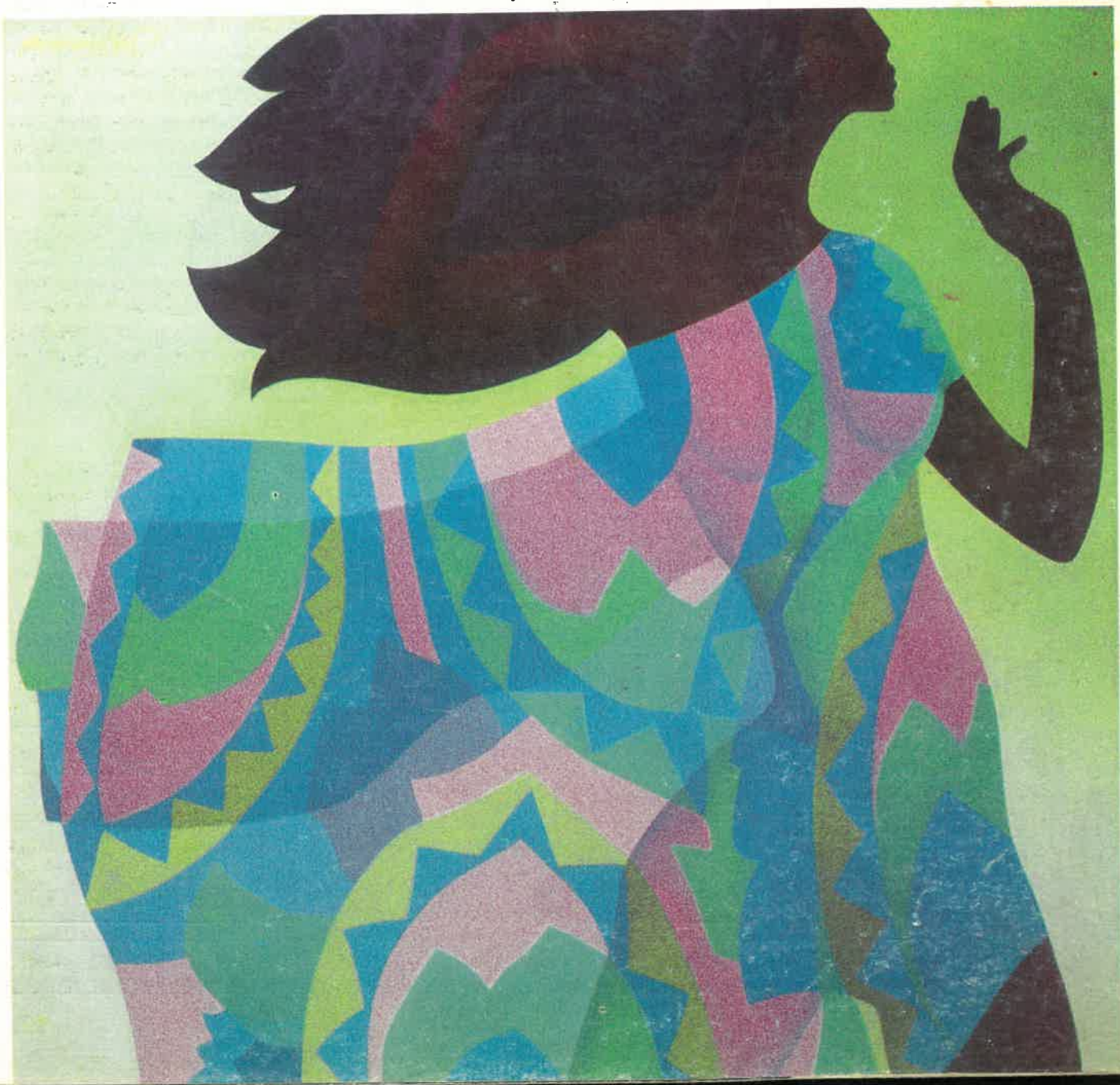
The "Acrylic Series - 1989-94" that he has published in book form, contains quite an impressive array of face studies. (See previous page, top.) They are extremely colourful, rendered in thick lines, rather stripes, of colour. The outline is black and the enclosed area purple, orange, dark brown, even green, with highlights and shadows in colour stripes of some related colour (as carmine on purple, vermilion on orange, orange on burnt umber).

Most faces look like savages, dark and rugged, wearing big flowers on nose, ear and around neck, or necklaces of big beads, and crown of zigzag lines. It is a far cry from the fine linework of "Portrait of Pakistan" and the smooth finish of "Lonely Girl". Though inspired by F. N. Souza, and affecting the same crudeness, the work is more colourful and attractive.



A "Flower Girl" series painting.

A "Lonely Girl" series painting.





Ali Imam

ALI IMAM

Ali Imam has been painting since 1941 when he joined the evening classes of the Nagpur School of Art but he held his first one-man show at Rawalpindi in 1952. Included in this exhibition were watercolour street scenes of Lahore and also scenes of pastoral activity, such as winnowing, threshing and churning by village women. The reason was that after graduating from Gordon College, Rawalpindi, in 1949, he worked with peasants in the villages as a Communist party worker till 1951. His observation of village life was projected in his paintings.

Later he left these activities and in 1952 joined government service as an art teacher at the Ghora Gali School near Murree. His water colour paintings of Murree scenes found a ready market. These had the gabled houses of Murree in the centre, very meticulously drawn, and the pine trees around them, here and there more freely rendered. It was quite amateurish work but it had a wide popular appeal.

Those were the days when Shakir Ali had come to Lahore after long higher studies in art in Europe. As a teacher in the Mayo School of Art, he was exercising a strong influence on the young artists of Lahore by leading them towards the modern idiom of art. Ali Imam recalls how once in Lahore, he returned after a day's outing with Moyene Najmi during which they had been paintings street scenes and other landscapes. Shakir Ali happened to come to their apartment and saw this work. "Ali Imam", he said, "what is this stupid romantic flirtation with nature. Study Cezanne. Try to understand the significance of form". Ali Imam says he was so taken aback by this criticism that he left painting for three or four months and got hold of books to try and understand Cezanne, and his forms which were the prelude to Cubism.

Haji Mohammad Sharif



In 1953 he had shifted to Bahawalpur as Art Teacher in the Sadiq Public School, and there he started work in a new style after taking to heart the criticism of Shakir Ali. He began to paint houses and in the process began to create solid forms, as he understood them. Crowding together the cubes of houses, mostly with gabled thatch roofs, he created some sort of a Cubist effect. In some, he also cast a strong lurid light on the scene, as in one painting entitled "Black Moon" exhibited at Murree in 1955.

He was still making these jumbled up toy houses when he went to London in 1956 and stayed there for ten years. These paintings of houses were prominent in the exhibition that he held at the Imperial Institute of London in January, 1958. Also included were some pictures of peasant women and cattle. These images he had tried to break up and render in straight lines in a slightly distorted way, after the manner of the Cubists. But it was extremely rudimentary work in that style.

By 1961, he had given up all that and was doing much more mature and sensitive work of which the subject was human figures and horses. The imagery showed the influence of the Italian sculptor Marino Marini. The human figures were painted with long thin limbs whose outlines were very lightly, roughly and brokenly indicated. The whole picture was in various tones of grey and the figure dimly glimmered through the background .

A favourite subject, after the manner of Marino Marini, was the horse and rider, the rider sitting at a rakish angle on the horse. The outline of the horse and rider was so rough and dim that weaknesses of drawing were easily concealed. In some of these paintings, the picture was divided into areas in the Cubist manner but the division was not in hard lines but with rough edges, in the form of large patches of different tones of grey. It was quite subtle and sensitive work but the drawing in many cases was extremely weak, especially of the horses.

It seems that Ali Imam pursued this style from 1961 to 1967 when he returned to Pakistan. In 1968, 1969 and 1970, he further refined this style and began to paint what he calls White on White. In this style, the ground was prepared with patches of various colours such as orange, red, blue and mauve, each mixed with white. Over this ground, a

whole layer of patches of white was laid and on that the picture was delicately outlined in soft colours. The picture was again patchily covered with white but so lightly as to let the imagery glimmer through, softly. All the emphasis was on subtlety and mellowness. The picture had an overall chalky effect, and the speckled treatment of the surface smothered the details.

In the early 70s, he was painting the Mother and Child series. In these paintings, Ali Imam tried to make a rhythmic design out of the two figures of the baby and the mother.

Later, his subjects were drawn from the village women of the Punjab, with their thickset figures, long loose shirts and baggy trousers, and ample scarves or dupattas.

For example, in one painting he shows three Punjabi women standing and talking. All are wearing the same kind of loose dress in which the human figure is completely concealed, except for the hands and the face. The face has been shown in profile in all three cases, for simplicity, and the heavy figures are flat and paper-thin. Only two hands are depicted and no feet. In each figure, the head scarf, the long frock and the baggy trousers have been painted uniformly without any folds or creases, except in the case of the head scarf in which too this has been indicated by lines rather than colour variation. Although there is one tonality of colour on each garment, there is actually stippling in many colours to create one general tone. This dominant tone is always grey or light brown, because the profuse use of white as ground subdues the small dots and patches of green, blue and red. He rather prides himself on introducing the use of white to younger artists and puts great store by the textural effects he creates.

He is very fond of painting the Punjabi village women at their homely tasks. In one picture he shows a woman churning curd to make butter, in another grinding corn, in a third pounding spices with a long pestle and a large mortar, while the woman sits on a low highbacked chair typical of rural Punjab.

The figures are utterly simplified and in any case they are heavily swathed in their loose dress. Even the face is dimly shown and the features barely suggested. Only the hands are firmly drawn of the central figure only, and these are made heavy to suggest manual work done by the women.



Three matrons in shalwar-qameez dress.

ALI IMAM

1924	*Narsinghpur (C.P. now M.P.) India.*
1949	*Graduated from Punjab University*
1952	*Ist one man show, Rawalpindi*
1956-67	*Lived in London*
1967-70	*Principal, Central Institute of Art, Karachi.*
1968	*Awarded President's medal for "Pride of Performance"; not accepted.*
1970	*Started Indus Art Gallery, Karachi.*
1980	*Awarded "Tamgha-e-Imtiaz"; not accepted*
1981	*"Quaid-e-Azam Award" by Pakistan National Council of the Arts; not accepted.*
1952-68	*Ten one-man shows in Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, London. None later but exhibited in group shows in Pakistan and abroad.*

The colouring is in layers of many colours but all applied in a rough grainy form. The white ground and the other colours seep through and create a speckled surface.

Another favourite subject, of which he has been painting a series, is music. The most ambitious in the Music Series, is his painting entitled Musical Party in which ten women are sitting in a circle while one is playing the tanpoora with the right hand and gesturing with the left hand to accompany her singing. It is quite a large painting in which the figures have been well composed and fairly well characterized, except the singer whose face has a mutilated look.

He is good in making group figure compositions and likes to arrange them in a circle, as in the music group of ten. In the group of seven rustic women (three carrying water pitchers), the circle is left open in front to make visible the women behind. It is an ingenious composition of some sitting and some standing women. Oddly, all the faces are in profile, as in Rajput miniature painting but the eye is not frontally drawn, as in those miniatures. The same facial type has been used in this and the previous painting in which all have nose and forehead in one line. The group looks like a tableau, frozen and motionless.

Seven sisters.



COLIN DAVID

One of the talented artists to emerge in the early 60s at Lahore was Colin David. He passed his M.F.A. from the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University where the Head was Anna Molka Ahmed, and he went for higher studies to the Slade School of Art in London where the Principal was Sir William Coldstream. Since both the teachers were upholders of Realism, it was only to be expected that Colin would follow in their steps.

Soon after passing his M.F.A. in 1960 and before going to the Slade, he held a two-man show of his paintings with his class-fellow, Sufi Waqar. Out of eighteen canvases put up on display, six were portraits, four still-lifes, two landscapes, two street scenes and four miscellaneous. It was obvious that portraiture was his main interest. It was also symptomatic that in one landscape showing fields, he emphasized the pattern and imposed a design on the scene.

On return from the Slade School, he devoted himself more and more to painting nudes, for which he became well-known.

"I paint nudes", he says, "because in my opinion the nude female form is the most beautiful that God has created and because the creation of woman came after that of man. The second creation was better than the first. Also I paint nudes because it is a kind of rebellion against social taboos. The human figure has always fascinated painters and many are painting nudes in Pakistan too. Not all nudes are vulgar. It all depends on the feeling with which the nude is painted."

In the 70s his nudes were shapely and attractive unlike his later models but even then he did not glamorize them. They were treated with cold objectivity. The palette was restricted and the colours were in low key. There were neither deep rich colours nor strong lights and shadows. The third dimension was not emphasized, and the rise and fall of the surface was only lightly suggested in low relief. The brushwork was kept invisible and the surface smooth. One interesting mannerism of Colin in those days was the introduction into the picture of some object, say a ball or a cushion, with bright colours and Op Art patterns that bewilder the eye. This Op Art pattern was sometimes black and filled the entire background.

In the 80s his nudes became even more matter of fact and unpoetic. There was nothing luscious and voluptuous either in their looks or their treatment. The models were ordinary women and the treatment was detached, unemotional and realistic.



Colin David



The Apple

Luminous Lines



COLIN DAVID

1957	*Born at Karachi.*
1960	*M.F.A. from Punjab University.*
1960-61	*Taught in Fine Arts Department, Punjab University.*
1961-62	*Studied at Slade School of Fine Arts, London.*
1962-64	*Taught in Fine Arts Department, Punjab University.*
1965-89	*Taught in National College of Art.*
1961	*First solo exhibition (at Arts Council, Lahore). Rarely exhibits publicly because most of his work is nude figures. Holds private shows at home.*



Relaxing Nude

The character of Colin's work becomes still more apparent in the second group of his paintings, namely draped portraits. He is not a society portrait painter and he does not paint commissioned portraits. Obviously, if he did this, the model would expect to be painted the way she sees herself and Colin does not want to lose his freedom to paint as he likes. Therefore he chooses his own models.

He paints full figure portraits, showing the person standing or reclining or sitting in a chair. The face is reduced in importance and he does not labour on it. Often it is averted to give greater importance to the figure study and avoid the emotional problem arising from a study of the face. All the emotional appeal that could be created in the face is intentionally left out. Thus, his pictures are not portraits so much as compositions.

The whole attention of the artist is focussed on the form of the figure and its disposition on the canvas. The model is only an element in the design which is the subject of the painting. Usually he places the figure in one corner and leaves a large part of the picture empty, in the manner of the Chinese and Japanese. Then he delicately balances the figure and its posture and gestures so that the relationship of the limbs to each other and to the torso and of the whole to the total picture area is just right on formal grounds. In short, the design quality of the picture is strongly emphasized.

The drawing, especially of hands and feet, is strong, sure and firm. There is severe simplification and only the bold form is caught with the greatest economy.

The dominant colour is grey or neutral except for the flesh tints of the bare skin. The range of colours is strictly limited and no effort is made to beautify the picture with many colours or with bright colours.



Departing Glimpse

There is a third group of pictures painted by Colin on religious themes, especially the Pieta (showing the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Christ). In these the nude body of Christ is treated with great delicacy and utmost economy. The modelling is minimum and the figure is shown almost flat, while the colours are restricted in range and almost monochrome. The deep tragedy of the occasion is underscored by the starkness of the picture. Subtle light effects are used to dramatize the event and to give it an unearthly and spiritual appearance.

To sum up, Colin is a painter of nudes which are painted with cool objectivity. They are sensuous but not sensual or provocative. He also paints full figure portraits which are not so much portraits as compositions because a study of the face is avoided by averting it or treating it lightly or by painting a back view. The arrangement of the figure and its placement on the canvas has a marked design quality. The colours of the drapery are dull and dark and of the bare body soft and subdued. His religious pictures take his simplification still further and his ability to create a spiritual atmosphere becomes evident. His is an art of economy and restraint, dispassionate realism and delicate balance. His paintings are produced with a sure hand and full command of the means, both drawing and painting.



Soothing Bath

IQBAL HUSSAIN



Iqbal Hussain (self-portrait).

Iqbal Hussain is one of the few artist of Pakistan who have devoted their art to the depiction of a certain section of society in the country.

Born and brought up in the red-light area of Lahore, he has turned his artistic talent to the painting of the denizens of that God-forsaken locality. He tries to catch the feelings writ large on their faces. He strives to place them in their authentic setting. In short, he endeavours to capture the whole tragic atmosphere of the place, with all its glitter and its squalor.

We have read of Toulouse Lautrec, who painted the night life of Paris, and Edgar Degas, who painted the ballet dancers, on stage and offstage. Then there was Kathe Kollwitz who poured out her soul in sympathy for the tragic lot of the coal miners of Germany, in the form of dark woodcuts and etchings.

Among Pakistani artists, no one studied the life of the people closely, except in the highly idealized form of Ustad Allahbux, who has painted Punjabi rural life. Those pictures are wholly lacking in characterization.

Iqbal's figures are very specific characters. Their dresses and their looks tell the tale of their lives. Some of them are heavily made up and decked out in finery, ready for their trade. Others are old and retired and are shown living a dull and depressing life, behind the scenes.

They have their classes and gradations, which are clearly shown. There is the obviously plain young woman, poorly dressed and looking miserable. Then there is the girl with better looks and better clothes but with a sad look on her face, as in an excellent, painting entitled "Naila", showing a girl who has found her way into the films and has hit the jackpot. She is all glamour and sits with confidence and an air of success but her heavy makeup gives away her real profession and the feelingless, mask-like face shows her inner unhappiness. There are also some hardened old women, inured to their profession, fat and prosperous-looking, who have a calmly businesslike look on their faces, because they have reconciled themselves to their situation.

Each picture is not a portrait only but a section of life, complete with its setting and background. In one picture, there are musical instruments lying at the back. In another, very suggestively, currency notes are lying in an open box. In a third one, anklet bells used in dancing, are lying in front of the figure. In almost all, makeup goods are lying at hand. In one, a man is visible in the background, suggestively pulling up his trousers. Sometimes, he shows the back of a girl sitting on the balcony, as they do, while a crowd of would-be customers is standing far below. In one picture he has shown three sad looking pretty girls sitting on a revolving table, hinting at the practice of group revellers selecting a girl in this way, choosing the girl who comes in front when the revolving table comes to a stop.

To emphasize the setting and also to create distance, he often shows the rear view of a second small figure at the back, behind the main figure. He is also fond of introducing a big mirror into the painting in which the main figure is reflected and another aspect of that is shown. The mirror is an essential part of that life of show and glitter.

These are the subjects. As for the technique, it is quite realistic but the colour treatment is free and loose. Each stroke is not separate, as in Impressionist painting, but each layer of tonal treatment is kept separate and not mixed and mulled up.

The flesh tint of the face is painted in many tones but he does not take liberties with the colour, as some modern artists do, and sticks to the red and pink local colour of the flesh, except that in the shadows he uses a little green or blue.

IQBAL HUSSAIN

1950	*Born at Lahore.*
1974	*Graduated in Fine Art from National College of Art, Lahore.*
1981	*First one-man show (at Punjab Arts Council, Lahore.) First Prize in All-Punjab Paintings Exhibition.*
1982	*Second Prize for oil painting in National Art Exhibition, Islamabad.*
1986	*First Prize in All-Punjab Painting Exhibition*

Woman with Mirror





Seeking Solace

His shadows are never black. In fact, he never uses black or brown colour. If he wants, a brownish shade, he mixes blue and orange. That is why his colours have an engaging freshness.

Usually, he paints his figures in diffused light but in his best and most ambitious pictures, he casts a strong light from top right or top left, keeping the sources of light always slightly behind, so that the front of the face is in shadow and only the edges are lighted. A good example is the attractive painting entitled "Naila" mentioned before. The light falling from behind, top left, illumines the hair on the left, the cheek, the shoulder and the left arm. Some light also shines on the right cheek edges, while the front of the face is in shadow, but has a diffused light. All this helps to bring out the structure of the head and the face and also the numerous shades of flesh tint, the lighted areas being whitish pink and the shaded areas bluish.

A varied and strong lighting scheme is also used in the elaborate picture painted by him, namely the group of two sitting and two standing women, exhibited in the National Exhibition of 1980. In the two excellent portraits put up by him in the 6th National Art Exhibition (1994), entitled "Sajida Vandal" and "Lubna", the first was half and the second full figure. They are sitting formally in a chair, gazing frontally and posing for a portrait. Clarity and detail and play of light on each part of the face, and a big mirror behind the full figure, are characterestics of Iqbal Hussain, rather than atmospheric effects, overall colour tonality and surrounding shades and shadows that are found in the work of his teacher, Saeed Akhtar.



Bliss on a Stringed Bedstead

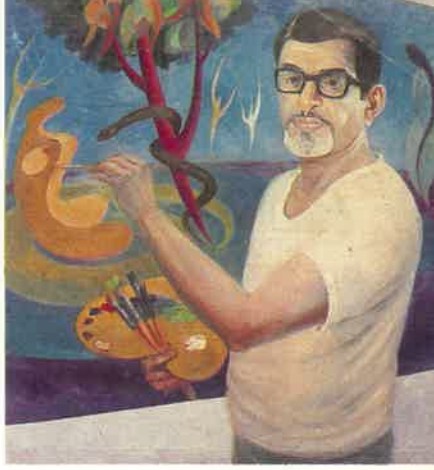
Sick of it all.



Naila



OZZIR ZUBY



Ozzir Zuby (Self-portrait).

When Independence came in 1947, there were two famous artists in Lahore, namely Chughtai and Allahbux who had won a name for themselves as far back as the 20s. But there was another young artist of only twentyfive years who was very prominent in Lahore namely Ozzir Zuby. He had a studio in the Open Air Theatre of Lawrence Garden (now Bagh-e-Jinnah) which was the rendezvous of poets, writers and intellectuals. It was there that he sculptured, after independence, the heads of Faiz, Nadeem, Hafeez Hoshiarpuri, Ehsan Danish and many others.

He was also in great demand for making title covers of books and magazines and in fact that was his main source of income. This strong link with literature has definitely influenced his drawing and painting because he has always tried to aim at poetical and fanciful and strange effects, and moreover, there is always a theme in his work, a literary dimension. The paintings that he made in those days were made with tempera on paper. They represented shrouded figures. Some looked like rocks and there were also rocks that looked like shrouded figures. Such ambivalent pictures he made on title pages of books also and these became the mark of his style. The pictures were really drawings that were later coloured flat and so the line work was very prominent and it was very fine and firm.

Then in 1950 he went for advanced studies in art to Italy. He had already passed a four year diploma course in 1944 from the Mayo School of Art. In Rome, he won a diploma from the Accademia di Bella Arti and stayed on there for four years. During this time, he used the opportunity to study the masterpieces of the old masters. Being a sculptor himself, he was particularly impressed by the great murals of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, especially by its sculpturesque quality and by the massiveness and robustness of the figures. It must have been the result of what he learnt in Italy that his painting changed from the flat, fragile, fanciful and delicate linework to massively moulded, three dimensionally painted huge murals in which the figures were not paper-thin dreamlike wraiths but substantial creatures of flesh and blood. From poetical fancifulness, he had come to hard realism.

The best expression of this change was the two huge murals that he made in 1965. He was inspired by the nationwide positive response to the challenge of India's sudden and treacherous attack on Pakistan on the night of 5-6 September, 1965. The courage and reckless abandon with which young and old, high and low rallied to the national cause was the theme that he painted in the form of a 20 ft x 6 ft oil painting called " The Awakening". It hangs today in the Head Office of the National Bank of Pakistan at Karachi.

Perhaps encouraged by his success, Zuby embarked upon another big mural which may be called "The Harvest Celebration". It is 17 ft. x 4 ft. and shows men and women peasants dancing with joy at the ripening of the harvest which is shown tall and golden, spreading like a wall in the background of the whole long mural. There are six panels in the mural and two figures in each mural, one bigger in front and one smaller behind. They are not actually dancing but jumping with joy or swaying in dance poses. The peasants are all shown strong and sturdy and the women generously endowed. The anatomical study of the figures is very good.

The painting is realistically done but the colour is applied not perfectly evenly but in large patches, to show the tonal variations of the tawny skins. Especially, the highlights stand out separately from the rest of the painting, and these patchy strokes give the style a certain looseness and freedom.

It seems that because no one attached much importance to realistic painting, even if it was on such a grand scale, and because there was such a vogue in Pakistan of modern abstract and Cubist painting, Zuby also gave up this kind of painting and tried to introduce some novelty and strangeness in his work. An example is his large canvas

OZZIR ZUBY

1922	*Born at Qasur.*
1943	*Graduated from Mayo School of Art, Lahore.*
1943-50	*Worked in film studios, making sculptured heads and figures and helping art director.*
1950-53	*Lived in Italy. Studied at Accademia di Bella Arti, Rome.*
1954	*Solo exhibition in Fine Arts Department, Punjab University. Settled in Karachi.*
1956-63	*Ran printing press. Published Urdu literary books and a magazine.*
1958-65	*Taught in art school of Arts Council, Karachi, and became its Principal.*
1968	*Set up his own School of Decor.*
1980	*Solo exhibition in Arts Council, Karachi.*
1990	*Solo exhibition at Indus Gallery, Karachi.*

Harvest Dance (detail)



entitled "Life" in which a strong sturdy man is shown sitting with one knee on the ground and one upraised, while a nude woman is bending over or rather floating over him and touching his hand, in a very fanciful pose. The long thick tresses of the woman are spreading all over the picture.

He wandered still farther away from realistic painting in the two sets of four paintings each that he created in 1985-1986, namely the folk tales of the four provinces and family groups of the four provinces.

In the folk tales he has depicted Sassi Punnu for Sindh, Sohni Mahiwal for the Punjab, Adam Khan Durkane for the Frontier and Shah Murad and Hani for Balochistan.

In both cases, except for the faces and hands, everything has been highly stylized by making the lines sweep in big curves that intersect and create all kinds of enclosed areas.

The design element increasingly dominates his latest work and the content is utterly simplified to the level of a bare square in some cases. In his latest series he has tried to emphasize the unity of the four provinces. For example, in one square painting, two diagonally intersecting lines divide the square into four triangles. In the top one is the Pakistan flag, tapered as if in perspective, and in the bottom triangle are four rectangles representing the four provinces. The right and left triangles are filled with scarlet colour. All the colours have been applied flat. This is hardly a painting and more of a diagram.

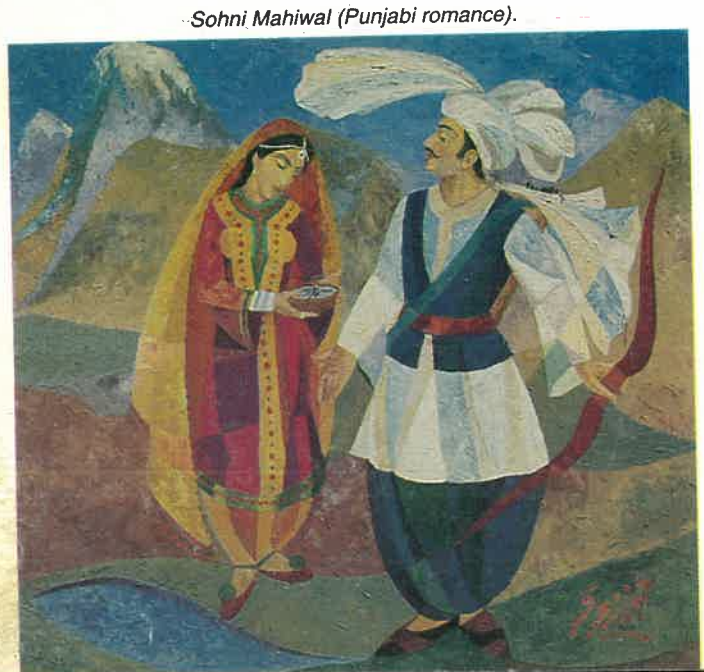
Yet another painting shows a square on the ground divided into four parts signifying the four provinces. From the centre rises a tree, with one thin trunk bending on one side. From that grow out four branches and on each branch is a flower in the form of a thin long oval. On one branch, the Pakistan flag is hanging like laundry. This is hardly a painting because everything has been reduced to a diagram and flatly coloured.

There is no doubt the laudable sentiment of patriotism behind the pictures but sentiment is not enough to make a painting. It must take tangible form in some way that represents the objects and the theme with power and imagination. Even if the theme is ignored and only the bare design is considered on merits as something abstract, it is too bare and barren to deserve any attention. The contents have been simplified to the vanishing point and the design has been reduced to the level of a common diagram.

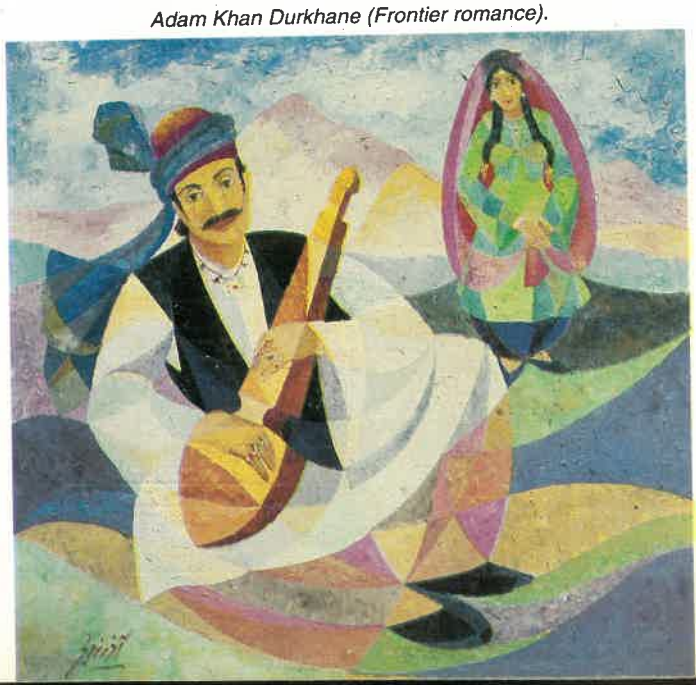
Drawings

Zuby does not have many paintings to show for the fifty years that he has been working. However, his drawings are more numerous, naturally, because it takes less time to make a drawing than a painting, and also because his grounding is mainly in drawing through the making of the book title covers, of which he claims to have made a thousand.

Sohni Mahiwal (Punjabi romance).



Adam Khan Durkhane (Frontier romance).



He has published two books of drawings. One is a very large book entitled "40 Pen Drawings by Ozzir Zuby" published in 1971 and the other is a small book published in 1986, entitled "Something Without Colour" which contains one opening section in which almost all the drawings are from the larger book; a second section which contains some scraper board drawings, and three sections in which have been printed the illustrations that he made for three books.

Besides, he has made illustrations for each of the 31 stanzas of Iqbal's famous poem "Shikwa" in size 15 1/2 inches by 11 1/2 in. These were made sometime in 1967 but have not been published so far. He is also illustrating each stanza of the poem "Jawab-e-Shikwa".

His greatest pen drawing, however, is a huge panel of 15 feet by 3 1/4 feet which is entitled "Peace" and represents the people of Pakistan aroused by the raised national flag and the dove of peace flying in the centre of the panel.

The drawings in the books range from realistic to abstract., There is only one that is wholly realistic, showing a black giant of a peasant with a sheaf of corn in his lap and an open book, kneeling with one knee on the ground and the other upraised.

The other almost realistic ones are the pictures that show a nude young man and a woman standing or sitting near each other. Drawn in thin uninterruptedly flowing lines, these show equal command of the human anatomy and of drawing.

These are still realistic pictures but in many cases, he wraps up the figure in swinging curves, both in the outline and inside, and then it becomes more of a design than a picture.

When the picture is enclosed in an oval, as in the case of the picture of mother and child on the cover of his large book of forty drawings, then it becomes a symmetrical design and nothing more. The fact that he has printed this symmetrically designed picture of mother and child on the cover of his large book of drawings shows his preference for this style.

Sassi Pannu (Sindh romance).



Shah Murad and Hani Baloch (Baloch romance).



MANSUR AYE



Mansur Aye

MANSUR AYE

1941	Born at Delhi.
1956	Matriculated. Joined Sketch Club, USIS, Karachi.
1963	Third Prize in Painting in National Art Exhibition, at Rawalpindi.
1964	First solo exhibition (at Arts Council, Karachi). Third prize in national exhibition

Moon-faced Beauty



Mansur Aye made his debut in the art world by holding an exhibition jointly with his friend Jamil Naqsh in 1962. From the beginning he showed his fascination with the youthful and innocent faces of teenage girls. Significantly, one of the paintings in his first exhibition was entitled "Sweet Seventeen".

To render this subject, he developed his own distinctive style which consisted of utter simplification of the image and rendering the face and the features with a few bold strokes. He used a very thick brush to make an outline of the face in the form of a circle, two straight lines for the thin long neck and two small circles for the breasts. A little dot sufficed for the small mouth and often the eyes were shown downcast coyly and drawn by just a semicircle with a fringe for eyelashes.

The vogue for Cubist abstraction was at its height in Pakistan in the 60s and so Mansur also crossed the face and neck with some diagonal lines and coloured them flat separately. The old Cubist trick of showing the profile of the face in the middle of the frontal picture of the face was also used by Mansur.

Thus, moon-faced girls with the moon in the background became the hall mark of his work. A flower here and there, some musical instrument being played and moonlight added to the atmosphere of peace and tranquility. There was no sign of bitterness or turmoil in his work. Everything was soft and serene.

And yet there was a certain abandon and lyrical spontaneity in his strokes, howsoever few and firm they might have been. It was basically a linear style with colours applied flat in different areas.

Almost three decades have passed since he started painting. He no longer makes circles for faces but there still is that small chin and small mouth and little breasts which is the mark of "the age of innocence". The eyes are still large and have a touch of wildness for they are always a little askew. The neck is thin and tapering upward. The limbs are twiggy and light. The fascination of that early image has pursued him:

"La belle dame sans merci
Thee hath in thrall!"

To show that he did not live entirely in a dreamworld of sweetness and light, he held an exhibition in 1967 in which the dilapidated old buildings and the rustic folk of Thatta were painted in a highly Impressionistic manner.

A big change came over his style in 1971 and 1972 when he introduced rich and varied colours into his work. Instead of the old misty and melancholy pictures, he now painted radiant and glowing ones with psychedelic colours and striking decorative patterns that sometimes had the colour vibrations of Op Art. Perhaps all this had something to do with his marriage which took place in 1971.

The use of the line also underwent a change. Instead of the blank spaces and economical linework of his previous paintings, he now made many pictures in which the whole area was filled with lines that continued from the outline inward, turning round on themselves in an endless maze like a coil but arranged in all kinds of patterns.

In May, 1972, he put up a whole exhibition of drawings done some in charcoal and some in pen and ink. This was proof, if proof was needed, of his excellent draftsmanship.

It was because of his good drawing that he was able to learn the art of making animated cartoon films. His ad films for the Eastern Federal Insurance Company were shown on TV in 1971. In 1989, he made animated cartoon films of small children's stories also for TV.

He also tried his hand at book illustration and illustrated children's books, such as "Chungia aur Naranji Phool" and "Hikayaat-e-Gulistan" for the Book Foundation of Pakistan, in 1974.

In 1977 he painted a large number of pictures in which he departed from realism and gave freedom to his brush to modify the image (mostly faces) by breaking the picture into separate areas in the manner of Cubism. Still more strangeness was introduced into the picture by making the two eyes slightly askew, and the other features too were randomly indicated. In these pictures, the brush strokes also were applied very freely, unlike the realistic paintings.

Some of the pictures were quite fanciful. In these, any strange outline was made for the face, say a triangle or something, and here and there lines and marks were made that could be imagined to be eyes and lips and nose. These hardly deserved to be called abstract because the image was not "abstracted' or drawn out of a real image but purely wild fancy which the artist thought was very modern and avant garde. Many people were taken in by this jugglery and even now Mansur sometimes indulges in such gimmickry just because there are people who will buy them.

The 80s were a very productive period for Mansur. In 1984, an exhibition was held of water colour paintings of Pakistani subjects by a Chinese artist. Mansur was inspired by these to try and paint Pakistani life in the same water colour medium, For this he undertook a tour of upper and lower Sindh and made hundreds of free and quick sketches of the life that he saw. A selected number were put up at an exhibition in 1986 and one hundred of these were made into lithographs by Mansur himself. These lithographs were bound into a book ("The Trip to Upper and Lower Sind" by Mansur Aye) which was widely welcomed.

Those water colour sketches were by no means masterpieces and some were quite slipshod but they all had an engaging informality and spontaneity. The beauty of the transparent water colour, with its fluidity and fluency is found in every picture.

As if to show that he was capable of extremely careful and meticulous drawing, he drew a beautiful female figure in the style of Chughtai's drawings, and made a dozen copies of it. Each was lightly coloured in a different manner and all were put up on show at a group exhibition in 1986.

Not content with all this, Mansur made a large number of face sketches in clay which were then fired into simple terracotta pieces, without any glaze or colour. The lineaments of the face were produced with only little sweeping strokes that moulded the clay upward or downward, producing just the right expression of shy, innocent girlhood which is Mansoor's ideal of female beauty. In 1989 he started making life size paintings in miniature style but left off on completing one.

It is strange but true that Mansur paints in many styles. Mostly he paints faces and not full figures. Some of these are realistically painted and some Cubistically. The realistic ones are not fully finished with photographic similitude but the lines are continuous and the colours neat within each area, instead of overflowing, and the brush strokes are not visible. However, he easily catches the resemblance of the subject. The range of colours is greater in these pictures.

In the other modern type of pictures, the treatment is very rough, the brush strokes free, the face and the features slightly awry and twisted and the picture divided into areas that balance each other. Frequently diagonal lines crisscross the picture and create geometrical areas which are then differently coloured, often in different tones of the same colour. Then the Cubist mannerism of combining the profile view with the full frontal view is sometimes used. There is also exaggeration and distortion of varying degrees in the pictures. The range of colours is limited, often to tones of one colour. At least a few are absolutely fanciful and do not deserve even to be called Cubist, but all this variety of styles is part of Mansur Aye's total oeuvre and the range is most impressive, even if one may like one or the other variety of his creations.







(From top)
Colour-spangled Damsel
Flower of Youth
Twiggy Teenager

NAJMI SURA



Najmi Sura

Najmi Sura (b. 1 951) is one of the very few artists of the country who have developed a new personal style based on our age-old miniature painting. This, naturally, requires more originality and creative power than merely continuing the miniature tradition which is being done by half a dozen or so artists, mostly in Lahore and a few in Karachi too, and elsewhere.

Of course, among our old masters, A. R. Chughtai and Fyzee Rahamin had already shown the way to building up an original style based, respectively, on our miniature and our mural traditions (Ajanta and Ellora), but that was way back in the 1920s. After the advent of independence, no one followed in their steps nor took a cue from them. Modern international styles were sweeping the world and almost all our artists were irresistibly drawn towards them.

Two women artists were the exception, each in her different way: Hajra Mansur and Najmi Sura. The first graduated from the Lucknow Art School in 1964 and was influenced by her Bengali teachers which led her to adopt the technique and style of the New Bengal School, while the second began to learn painting in the late 70s from Jamil Naqsh, who had studied miniature painting under Haji Mohammad Sharif, and she came to prominence only in 1980. In 1984, she won the First Prize at the annual exhibition of the Arts Council of Pakistan. Karachi. Since then, her work has continuously grown in popularity, both among the general public and among connoisseurs.

Our miniature painters pride themselves on copying the work of the old masters literally or making new compositions by taking elements from different works. Only some make original compositions

Najmi Sura creates her own new compositions but takes care to maintain the link with tradition by using the old familiar poses and gestures, the profile view, the expressionless face, the old hairdo, dresses and jewellery. Even the folds of the flowing lower garments and the ample scarf (dupatta) are formal and schematic, not natural.

However, there are many differences. The most obvious is the size. She has blown up the miniature to the size of an easel painting. Not only that, she brings the figures closer into view or forward in the picture space whereas in olden miniatures the figures are placed at some distance.

Then instead of using the traditional water colour medium (actually, water mixed with glue) on paper, she uses oil colour on canvas specially treated to make it very smooth for minute drawing and smooth colouring.

She retains the linear treatment of the subject, as in all miniatures, so that the work is basically a drawing. The charm of the line drawing is uppermost and Najmi's command over the line is noteworthy. Especially where she outlines the bare parts of the body and also in the many folds of the flowing dresses, the line is very fine, uniform, unbroken and unfaltering. It has a smooth flow but has no exaggerated rhythm or calligraphic strokes which grow thick and thin from place to place

The use of the line may be the same as in olden miniatures but the quality of the figure drawing is vastly different. Even though the figures are placed in traditional poses with traditional gestures, they are no longer dolls and puppets but creatures of flesh and blood. There is a youthful fullness of the physique which seems to swell even under the garments. The dress does not hang limply on a bare structure but drapes correctly the hidden anatomy This corporealness of the figures is sometimes emphasized by making them slightly fleshy and corpulent. As they are mostly nude or semi-nude, her command of figure drawing cannot fail to impress.

NAJMI SURA

1951	*Born*
	B.A. from Karachi University.
1973	*Began learning miniature painting from Jamil Naqsh.*
1977	*First time exhibited painting. Sells at home, mostly.*

Tall beauty leaning on tree.



The treatment of the main subject, the figure or figures. is meticulous in the old tradition. The colour has an enamel smoothness especially on the bare parts of the body. The laborious depiction of jewellery and border decoration on the dress again calls for minute work in the old tradition but in the treatment of the background, she indulges in free brushwork sometimes, and creates rough textural effects, either for their own sake or to give the picture the look of a faded old manuscript, even with torn or frayed edges.

As in this freely brushed in background, so in her layout of the figure or figures in the picture space, she is decidedly modern. Take the case of the single figures, which are the commonest. Sometimes she uses the old devices to set the figure firmly into a composition by putting the rectangle of a chair or of a carpet behind the seated figure. Sometimes the figure is shown sitting out on a terrace and a low parapet of jali (trellis work) runs behind her.

At other times, the layout has a modern touch. A standing figure is placed asymmetrically to one side of the picture space and the vertical figure is balanced by a horizontal bough of an unseen tree or a horizontal strip of landscape.

In some paintings, she makes very complex compositions using towers, gateways, arches and other architectural members and motifs. These, however. are arranged together according to the requirements of art though they may be illogical and impossible architecturally. This architectural setting is very different from the neat architectural background in olden miniatures. It is all quite fanciful and the artist lets herself go in applying the colours also, which she does not do on the main figure. A female figure, large in comparison with the buildings, is included in the composition, and sometimes a peacock, again outsize in that setting.

In some paintings she depicts as many as half a dozen female figures and that becomes a challenging problem of composition but she solves it admirably . In the painting printed here, she catches beautifully the lively movement of the damsels as they swing along in loose flowing garments.

The same animation and elan and natural movement is captured in her animal paintings, such as that of a running elephant or a rearing horse, which has been painted in the noble old tradition. The olden artists were masters of this subject and Najmi Sura cannot possibly outdo them but what they had shown minutely as bare suggestions, she has spelled out fully and expansively which is quite creditable, considering the fact that she does not live surrounded by horses and elephants as the olden artists did in the days gone by.



Lady with long skirt



Bustling Rajasthani beauties.



Composed and collected.



Sardar Mohammad

SARDAR MOHAMMAD

Sardar Mohammad has been painting from the early 40s and has developed a style of his own. He is primarily a commercial artist and therefore both the subjects and the style of his paintings are strongly influenced by his training. He paints subjects that have a tourist appeal and his paintings are often used for calendars. These are very traditional subjects which show "culture" in the sense of show business. For example he paints the traditional village maidens carrying water pitchers on their heads or a bundle of hay or churning curd to make butter or milking the cow. He has also painted any number of scenes of khattak dancing, tent pegging, camel racing, horses dancing to the beat of the drum, and so on.

More of "culture" is thrown in by prominently including in these pictures traditional printed fabrics or embroidered cloths streaming down the backs of camels or covering the head and trailing behind village damsels. Sometimes, the face is only a very small part of the picture and lightly executed, often in profile, while all the labour is spent on decorating the big head scarf billowing on and behind the village maiden.

The figures of both men, women and animals, especially camels, are simplified down to a diagram, in which all the limbs are drawn with straight lines. The anatomy is not only utterly simplified, it is flattened, as if cut out of paper, and it is exaggerated, for example by making the necks of men and women long, and the legs of the camels likewise elongated. The faces are dumb and expressionless as in dolls or puppets. Often human and animal figures are repeated in a composition to make a pattern. There are three village maidens in a row carrying water pitchers; three swordsmen in a dance in similar poses; four horses running side by side in tent pegging; four camels running side by side in a race. It is all a highly contrived pattern.

He has an eye on the layout above all, and accordingly elongates the neck or the legs or the arm to suit the requirements of the design.

He sometimes uses the Cubist trick of turning the natural outline of the figure into straight lines, with many angles. The turban of the man and the hair of a woman are thus described in straight lines and a curve here and there. Similarly, the legs of horses are shown by means of long triangles tapering down to a point and then the hoofs are shown by a small triangle. These mannerisms fail to catch the true character of the image, human or animal.

The same easy simplification is found in the rendering of drapery. The long fall of the head scarf is shown by long straight lines and the folds of dress likewise with more straight lines. Because he makes the lines with the edge of the palette knife, all the folds and creases in the dress are shown straight. Even when the line is scratched out with the tip of the knife, it is straight, because that is easy to draw. There is no effort to show the folds and creases of the dress by means of varying tones and shades of colour. Only lines are used and these too mostly straight.

He uses bright eye-catching colours. The paint is applied lightly with the palette knife so as to leave bubbles and dots of white. More scraping and scratching further increases the texture of the painted surface. He loves to leave large blank spaces with no image but only colour, filled in with these textural effects.

In order to make the picture still more colourful, he often introduces traditional embroidered or block-printed fabrics into the picture. These often cover the backs of camels and trail down from them. Embroidery is also shown on the dresses of women and even men sometimes.

Everything is done to make the picture decorative. The total effect produced is of feeble prettiness and there is no sign of any strength or force in the drawing or the painting. The artificiality of the images, human and animal, makes them look like toys or

SARDAR MOHAMMAD

1918	Born at Faisalabad (old Lyallpur)
1934-38	Earned Diploma from Mayo School of Art, Lahore.
1949-51	Studied at Parson's School of Design, New York.
1951-52	Worked in Department of Films and Publications.
1952	First solo exhibition (in Karachi).
1952-72	Worked for advertising agencies.
1962	B.A.
1972-76	Lived in Nairobi, teaching art.
1977-79	Principal, Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi.
1980-90	Worked for United Advertisers.

Rustic belle



puppets. His work comprises the most conventional subjects (like village maidens carrying water pitchers) and he renders them in the most conventional way, whether the convention is Cubist sometimes or merely utterly simplified and diagrammatic, made up of a number of wavy undulating lines or loop or curves.

The charm of his work lies mainly in colour. For example, his painting "Reflections" shows a row of village women carrying water pitchers. These are placed quite high up in the vertical picture. The sky above and the vast space below is all covered with speckled purple colour in which the reflections of the reddish purple dresses of the women are vaguely indicated. The web of colour by which the water and the sky are shown is the main attraction of the picture for which the subject is just an excuse, and hardly visible.

At other times, he achieves spirited action in the racing horses engaged in tent pegging and some of these pictures are good, except that the horses look too much like toys.

Yet again, his exaggeration sometimes achieves a purpose and is not entirely pointless, as it often is. For example, his painting "Waderas" (Sindhi landlords) shows four proud turbaned persons riding four camels whose legs have been greatly elongated. This emphasizes the haughtiness of the Waderas and their overweening pride.

He has also painted many pictures showing a number of pigeons flying. In one of these paintings he is able to show very effectively the play of light on the flock of pigeons gradually diminishing in size and vanishing into the vast blue sky. This won a prize in the National Exhibition of 1959.

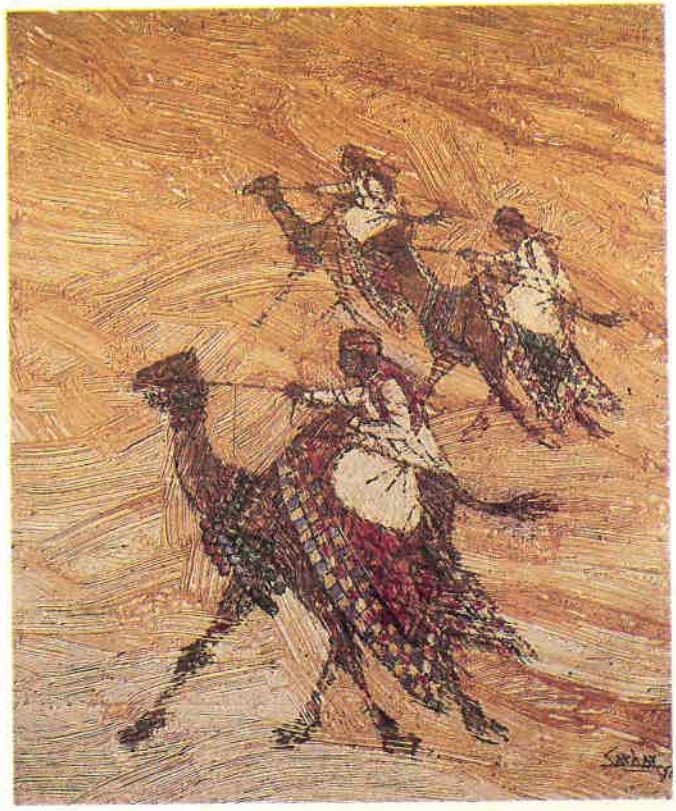
His output during the last fortyfive years or so that he has painted has been quite large and there are at least half a dozen of these pictures that are memorable.





(From top):

Swarming pigeons or moths around flame?
Absorbed in holy book
Game of polo
Camel race







halid Iqbal

KHALID IQBAL

Khalid Iqbal painted many excellent portraits and still lifes in the earlier part of his long career as an artist but for about two decades now, he has been devoting himself wholly to landscape painting.

His special talent in this field won early recognition, for he recalls with pride that he won a prize for landscape painting at the Slade School of Art, London, in 1954, when he was a student there.

His earliest education in art was at the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University from where he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1949.

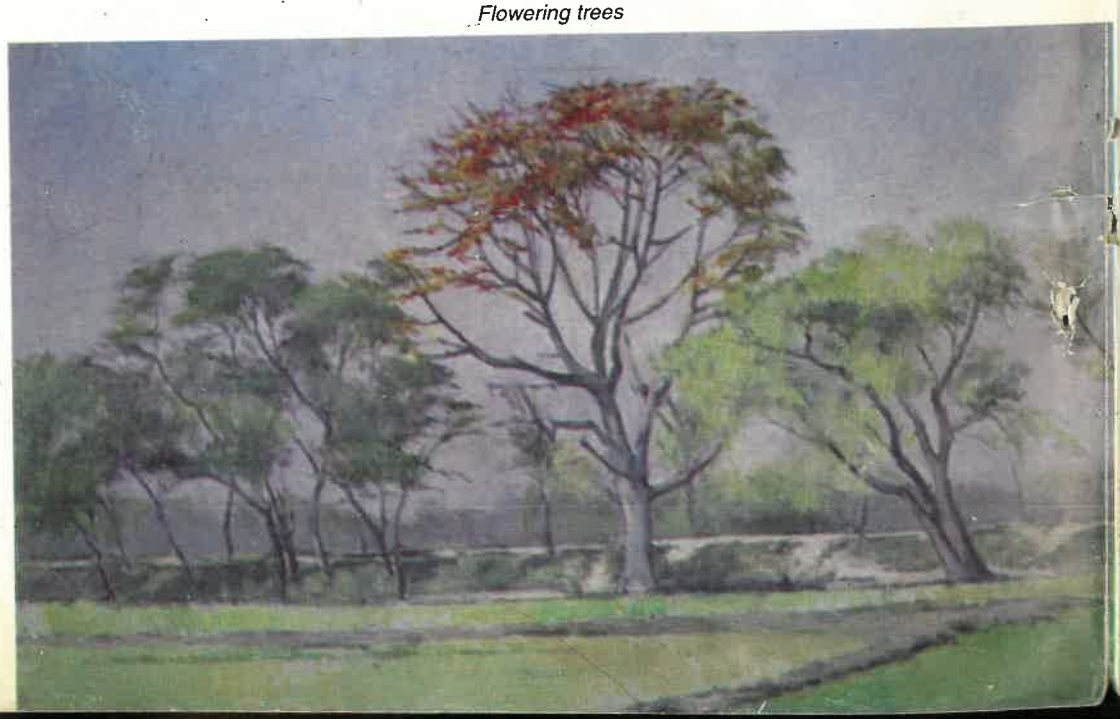
The Head of the Department was Anna Molka Ahmed who encouraged her students to paint realistic landscapes of the villages around Lahore. But if one sees the landscapes painted by some of her earliest students of those days, such as Anwar Afzal, Naseem Anwar and Saeeda Karim, one finds that these are really detailed descriptions of rural life. They show the huts, the cattle, the carts, the villagers at work and the children at play, more as juxtaposition than as composition!

Khalid rebelled against this anecdotal and minutely descriptive style of landscape painting. His later education at the Slade School of Art, 1952 to 1955, again was realistic but a simple, austere and undecorative kind of realism. The Head of the School was Sir William Coldstream who belonged to a group of artists called the "Euston Road Group", which included Victor Pasmore, Claude Rogers and others. They avoided the mannerisms of modern art and painted everyday life with cool objectivity.

On return from London in 1955, Khalid again joined the Fine Arts Department as a Senior Lecturer and very soon he developed a style of his own in landscape painting, which he practices to this day.

There is a landscape by him reproduced in the catalogue of the Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture arranged by the Fine Arts Department in 1957. It shows a Punjab rural scene but with no life. There is a broad area of the sky and an equally broad plain foreground. In the middle on the horizon is a line of flat-topped mud houses and some low trees, all forming a strip. The foliage of the trees is in a solid mass with a slight indication of light on one side. The mud house walls are featureless and flat except for the doors. The top edge of the front wall catches the light and this little touch brightens up the scene. The sky is without clouds and the foreground without shrubs or stones. The

Flowering trees



Landscape Painters

light is subdued and so are the colours which are predominantly grey-green. The brushwork is visible but it is not bold and prominent and swinging. It is just sufficiently vibrant to make the picture a little exciting. The strokes are diagonal. Subtle colour variations, within a narrow range, and judiciously controlled textural effects on all areas of the picture but especially on the trees and the foreground, add aesthetic appeal. The whole painting is executed with great economy of means, restrained brushwork, subdued colours and with a special eye for composition.

Though Khalid Iqbal has painted hundreds of landscapes after this, the above broad features endure. Not only the style but even this composition recurs because he paints the same rural scene of the Punjab as found around Lahore and brings the same eye to the selection and the painting of the scene. Of course, the work has grown more mature and the study of light effects more subtle and sensitive. Today his style is admiringly followed by almost all landscape painters of Lahore. Six of his recent, landscapes, were printed beautifully in large size by Packages Limited for their 1990 calendar.

Again, it is a bare featureless landscape which is the subject of his paintings. There are no anecdotal details and no human or animal figures, except in one. In each painting there are only two or three trees and sometimes even one, besides a couple of flat-topped mud houses with bare walls. There is the same broad plain foreground and an almost equally broad sky with no clouds. The trees are thin, tall and with sparse foliage which is a soft purplish green if far, and yellowish green, if near. The grass in the foreground is russet brown. The scene is all typical of the hot and dusty Punjab plains, but it is carefully chosen by the artist according to his taste. The brush strokes are diagonal but subdued.

He has tried to change his long-familiar composition in some pictures. Instead of the tar away small trees on the horizon, he has painted the trees more close up, in these recent paintings. They rise from the horizon across the sky to the top of the picture. In one case, even flowering trees have been painted, and these are perhaps Indian coral trees with red blossoms. There are also other such in private collections.

In the foreground also, in one case, he has painted some long grass with bright yellow flowers. It could be mustard but perhaps is not because he does not paint cultivated fields, only nature in the raw.

Often his foreground is a pool of water and he is very adept in showing the reflections of the mud houses and the trees in the water. In one case long brown weeds are growing in the water in the foreground and casting reflections. It is very subtle sensitive work marked by economy of means and serenity of mood.



Familiar scene



Peaceful prospect

KHALID IQBAL

1929	*Born at Simla (India)*
1949	*Graduated in Fine Arts from the Punjab University.*
1952-55	*Studied at Slade School of Art, London.*
1955-65	*Taught in the Fine Arts Department, Punjab University.*
1965-81	*Taught in the National College of Art, Lahore.*
1976	*Given Quaid-e-Azam Award by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.*
1980	*"Pride of Performance Award" by the Government of Pakistan.*

On the edge of a village





Grand old tree



Mud houses nestled in greenery

ZULQARNAIN HAIDER

Zulqarnain Haider has had the benefit of the best art education at Lahore and Paris. For the last thirty years he has been teaching and practising art in Lahore where he is one of a group of distinguished landscape painters that include Khalid Iqbal, Ijaz ul Hassan, Iqbal Ahmad, Shahid Jalal, Mohammad Nazir and others.

He paints the countryside surrounding Lahore where the land spreads flat for miles, covered with field or fallow and here and there a tree or two or a thin clump of trees. Of these the commonest varieties are the small thorny kikar and the flowering acacia, with a slight build and sparse foliage, as well as the ubiquitous sheesham or tahli, with thin tall trunks and more dense foliage.

The focus of attention in Zulqarnain's paintings is the tree, one or a few, placed at some distance, so that there is a spacious foreground and sky . Usually, there is nothing to distract the attention from the trees, either in the foreground or in the sky. The sky is wan and cloudless, which is typical of Lahore, and the foreground may be a dusty village road or uneven ground with patches of grass or scrub or sometimes horizontal strips of green fields. A low line of mud houses on the horizon gives depth and distance to the landscape.

It is a neatly arranged composition in which there is nothing jumbled or jagged or wild or if there was, it has been tidied and subdued and looked at from an angle that places the tree or trees centre of stage, sometimes on a little hillock, and everything else falls in its place and due position. The scene is bathed in a clear sunny light but there are no strong light effects or contrasts of light and shade. Even shadows are hardly emphasized. Peace prevails and there is no suggestion of movement, much less of tumult. Human and animal figures are largely absent.

Just as there is nothing wild or uncouth in nature, so the treatment is suave and refined. No liberties are taken with the form or the colour. There is no flourish of brush strokes and no attempt to break up the light into component colours or to use

Impressive row of tall trees





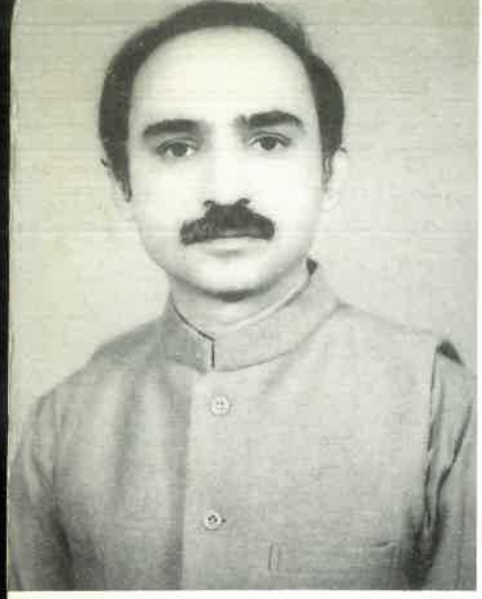
Boat building at Fish Harbour

wet and because the gestural play of the brush strokes has an emotive value which is exciting. There is a danger, however, of these strokes getting jumbled up and then the result is confusion.

This confusion is often noticeable in the foreground of the picture where there is nothing to depict except the ground, without any marked features. The unrestricted freedom, then, often leads to a flurry of random strokes that do not add up to any clear form. The same sort of confusion is sometimes noticeable in the painting of the water in the boat scenes. Because, he does not paint each wave meticulously, he roughly depicts the general effect of the wavy water and in this he sometimes succeeds and sometimes does not. Perhaps, he has to study more carefully the form of the wavy water in the sea. It is easy enough when he depicts a perfectly still body of water. Then only horizontal strokes are enough to depict the water. But even this becomes over-simplified sometimes and one misses a realistic and authentic touch which catches the true look of a body of still water. In the case of water with waves, small or large, the problem is more difficult. Even if a rough and shorthand method is used to depict the water, it must catch some of the true character of the scene. Merely random strokes of the brush and aimless scribbles do not achieve anything.

It is also noticed that there are never any clear cloud formations in Hayee's paintings. Partly, this is because in Karachi clear cloud formations are seen only during the rainy season, but this can be only part of the reason because sometimes at least these must be there. In Hayee, the clouds are simply grey patches with fading edges, often blowing in one direction under the pressure of the wind. Sometimes, no wind direction is noticeable. Hayee says that he used to give much more attention and labour to depicting the clouds in his early days but later realized that this detracts attention from the main subject. Therefore, he keeps the clouds less prominent and in faint colours. On the other hand, clouds sometimes can be so interesting that they can form the main subject of the painting and the scene on the ground can take a secondary place, for a change.

His best work is undoubtedly most outstanding, both in the case of the boat scenes and the arboreal scenes, but more so the latter.



Shahid Jalal

SHAHID JALAL

Shahid Jalal is a chartered accountant by profession. He was thirty in 1978 when he decided to become an artist and took two years' leave to study at the National College of Art in Lahore. However, he left the college after one year and continued to work independently. By 1980, he had painted enough to hold a one-man show in Lahore under the auspices of the Punjab Council of the Arts. He began by painting the old quarters of the Lahore city as seen from the roof top, especially during the festival of Basant when the sky is full of thousands of colourful kites flown by young and old. This subject of Lahore as seen from the roof top has been painted by Mohammad Nazir and Ajaz Anwar also.

Then, looking for an unusual subject, Shahid hit upon the shrines and graves of saints that dot the countryside of the Punjab. His friends expressed doubts on the selection of such a weird subject but Shahid persisted and painted about thirtyfive canvases. When he held an exhibition of these paintings, almost all were sold.

Next, for two years, he turned to the more cheerful subject of the Bagh-e-Jinnah (garden) and painted various small sections and even groups of trees and even particular flower beds. Thus, he has painted a crowded flower bed of cockscomb plants. In another canvas, he has painted a stretch of nasturtium flowers.

Each flower is individually painted and there is very little differentiation because of light or distance. Even the bricks forming the edge of the flower bed are painted individually. In this respect there is a touch of primitiveness and naivete in his work because he is largely a self-taught artist. Although Khalid Iqbal was teaching at the National College of Art when Shahid studied there for one year, he did not take the easy way out of copying the style of his teacher who has influenced strongly the other landscape painters of Lahore, such as Zulqarnain Haider, Mohammad Nazir and Misbahuddin Qazi.

Unlike them, Shahid applied his paint very thick. Unlike them, his colours are deep, dark and intense. He does not leave a vast foreground or extensive sky, like those others,

A manicured garden



SHAHID JALAL

1948 (Aug. 13) Born at Lahore. Qualified as Chartered Accountant. Briefly studied in National College of Art, Lahore.

1980 First solo exhibition (at Punjab Council of Arts, Lahore).



Flower beds dotted with cacti

with only a few trees or houses on the horizon. Rather, in Shahid, the canvas is crowded with plants or trees and often they are shown fairly close up.

Therefore, there is little atmospheric effect (uniform dimming of colours) or of perspective (diminution of size with increasing distance.)

Even when the subject is extensive, like a stretch of ripe wheat field or other tall green crop, it is all painted unvariedly and somewhat monotonously because there is neither play of light nor any suggestion of distance.

By 1989 and 1990 he was painting his favourite close up restricted views of garden scenes in water colour, as a change from his erstwhile medium of oil colours. In this medium, the white surface of the paper is exploited by leaving little blank edges or tiny spaces all over the picture and this lets in the light. So, there is bound to be play of light if the water colour medium is properly handled.

Shahid has actually selected subjects for his water colours in which light is filtering down through a tree on the ground and on the figure sitting there. This mottled effect of chequered light is often well caught by Shahid in his water colours.

But otherwise, the style is the same as in his oil colours. There is the same love of detail and texture and the use of a multiplicity of dots and dashes of colour to build up the image, and thick opaque layer of paint.

There is none of the free flow of colour or the sweeping washes or one colour running into another imperceptibly which is the charm of this medium. Rather, it is handled thick like oil colour with no free and spontaneous strokes and no thick swipes of the brush in which the colour gradually fades off leaving a grainy surface at the end.

There is nothing casual or even offhand in his work. Both the subject and the style are neat, orderly, planned, precise and refined, like the artist himself.

His latest landscapes entered in the 1994 National Exhibition showed that he has taken up the challenge of broad panoramas with mountains and broad vistas and variegated features.

Distant mountain





Dr. Ajaz Anwar

AJAZ ANWAR

There is an earthiness and closeness to the soil in the work of the Lahore artists. No wonder, in style they tend to be realistic and in subject love to dwell on their surroundings. Even A.R. Chughtai, who paints an ideal world of the imagination, has painted many pictures of the Punjabi peasant with his plough and his bullock. Ustad Allahbux devoted himself wholly to the painting of the rural life of the Punjab. Anna Molka Ahmed set the vogue for painting village scenes and this was followed by her many pupils of the early years such as Anwar Afzal and Tasnim Mazhar.

However, no one has so lovingly and so dedicatedly painted the old streets and old houses of Lahore as Ajaz Anwar.

His interest in this subject arose when he was a student of architecture in Istanbul from 1972 to 1978. He still has many water colour paintings of the old streets and old houses of Istanbul that he did there.

His interest in the subject was confirmed when he studied "The Conservation of Cultural Property" in Rome under the auspices of UNESCO in 1977.

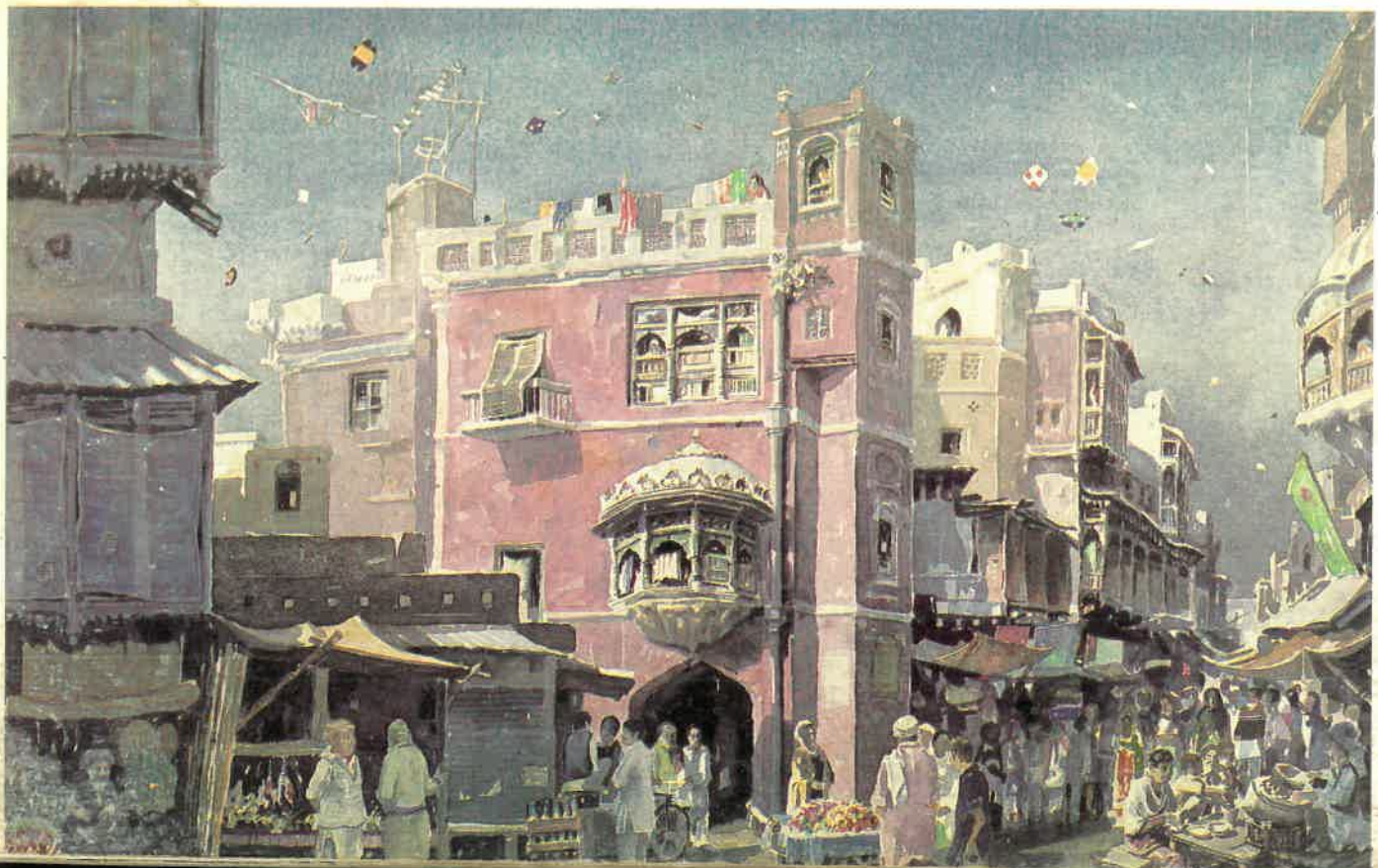
It is because of this background that he selects as the subject of his paintings those fast disappearing wooden balconies and ornamental bay windows and arches and domed turrets and numerous other quaint and ornate features that adorn the old streets and bazars of Lahore.

No doubt his paintings have a documentational value no less than an artistic appeal. He is himself very conscious of this. So when he sets out to paint Lahore, his training in the conservation of old monuments guides his eye and his hand. These quaint old-fashioned buildings, these elaborate plaster mouldings, these ornately carved wooden balconies will be gone soon, either because of old age or because they are being replaced with modern structures. So, within a few decades these paintings may be the only record of old Lahore.

AJAZ ANWAR

1946	Born.
1970	B.A. (Hons.) M.A. Fine Arts, Punjab University.
1972	First solo exhibiton (at Rawalpindi).
1972-78	Ph.D. in History of Art and Architecture from Istanbul University.
1980 to date	Asstt. Professor, National College of Art, Lahore.

Inside Lohari Gate



Then there is the undeniable artistic value and charm of these paintings. This lies above all in the success with which he controls the multitudinous details of the street scene and subordinates them to an overall design. Certain large masses in the scene are firmly balanced against each other. For, example, he often paints vertical pictures in which multi-storeyed houses are shown on either side of a narrow lane. The block of houses on one side are shown in shadow and on the other side in sunlight. Less portion of the shadowed side is shown while the lighted side is given more prominence and space. The blank area of the sky on the top between the two blocks of buildings is balanced by an open space in the foreground. Thus a good balanced overall design is achieved.

Then within each block of buildings, there are various areas which are slightly different in colour but the artist paints the whole block in such a way that there is tonal harmony between the different areas.

In the details of the building the artist remains faithful to the original and strictly realistic but he imposes a pattern on the reality by giving each area a certain tone and colour and keeping all the different areas in harmony with each other. In this way, the chaos of reality is brought under control and subjected to a design and this is the function of art.

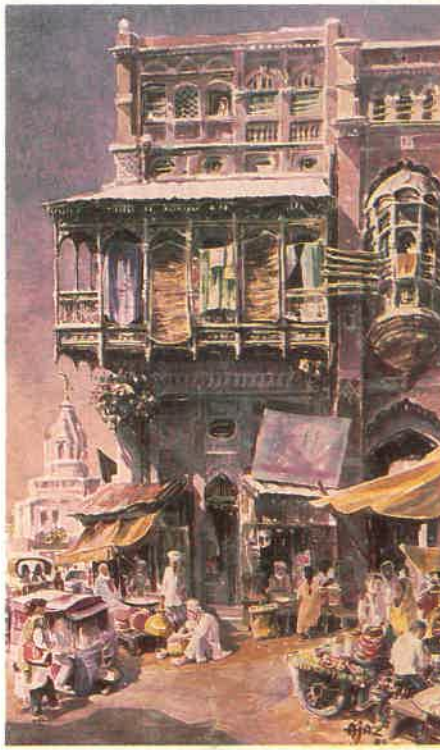
Added pleasure is given by the play of light and shade, especially on the projecting mouldings and the balconies.

Above all, there is the charm of the water colour medium in which the picture is rendered. All the colours of real life are slightly heightened and the pale weak hues are made deeper and brighter. Then, in applying the colours on each small object, often the edges are left blank and white, which gives a typical look of water colour painting to the picture.

It may be pointed out that there is no sign of brush strokes in the paintings of Ajaz. This is because he is so keen to depict the correct architectural details of the buildings he is painting that he cannot let go his brush and produce colouristic effects.

There is no doubt that Ajaz Anwar has developed a distinctive and very individual style of realistic painting in which he has preserved the charm of the old streets and houses of Lahore and that is a noteworthy contribution.

Jain Mandir (Collection of Mian Nawaz Sharif)



Old Anarkali (Collection of I.C.I. in England)





Ghulam Mustafa

GHULAM MUSTAFA

Graduating in Fine Arts from the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 1974, Ghulam Mustafa had already gained recognition when he was awarded a Special Prize for a landscape painting in oils at the 1978 Punjab Exhibition of Paintings and Graphic Arts.

His prime love has been landscape painting and he is one of the distinguished group that flourishes in Lahore but unlike many others he has steered clear of the influence of senior artist Khalid Iqbal.

Naturally it took him many years to develop a mature and distinct style and he did not hold a solo exhibition till 1988, although he often took part in group shows.

The landscapes that he entered in the National Exhibitions of 1980 and 1984 show very generalized panaromic views, respectively, a village seen from afar and a very broad distant view of the river with boats. Both are thin, watery and subdued.

By the time he took part in the First Art Biennale of Pakistan '87, he had already found his metier. He had hit upon a subject quite different from that of the other landscape artists of Lahore. He began painting the old monuments of Lahore from unusual angles so that there was a broad stretch of greenery in the foreground and the building at the back. Thus he combined landscape painting with architectural subjects. He thus provided some objects in the featureless Punjab landscape painted by the others and softened the rigidity of the architectural subject by the green setting and the distant hazy look. The area of vision had been greatly reduced and the treatment more particularized. The freedom in the treatment of the landscape is balanced by the neatness essential for the depiction of buildings.

An example of this is the painting reproduced on the left, showing a section of the Lahore Fort in the background, greenery in the middle and an extensive lawn in the foreground. An attractive morning or evening sunlight falls sideways on the scene and creates alluring highlights and shadows.

Such architectural subjects in the background and greenery in front were prominent in the first solo exhibition he held at the Alhamra at Lahore, in 1988. Included in the show were oil paintings in one of which a corner of Jahangir's Tomb was observed through the generous canopy of branches and foliage of a venerable banyan tree. In another the conical Gothic towers of St. Anthony's Cathedral rise behind while a much broader foreground shows wild shrubbery and greenery. Yet another architectural subject painted was Haveli Raja Dhyan Singh. There was also a scene of the Ravi glimpsed under the over-arching foliage of a grand old tree.

Obviously, the artist had lovingly painted his native city of Lahore and its many well-known sights but from unusual angles. There were a few scenes from Murree too but it was obvious where his heart lay and what subjects he painted with gusto.

In the third stage, he zoomed in still more closely on the subject, and this subject was the dark and narrow alleys of old Lahore. He thought of this subject after he painted the Sheranwala Gate in 1987 but this was only the entrance to the narrow streets that he started painting later and is still doing. The close-ups of the streets, often seen through a narrow opening, are a far cry from his earliest panoramic landscapes, as also are the strong contrasts of light and dark from the evenly bright and sunny stretches of his old loves.

All these are done in pastel. He put up a whole exhibition of his pastel work in 1990, most of which consisted of these very narrow lanes seen from close, and also a few views of village houses, cattle and greenery.

GHULAM MUSTAFA

1952	*Born*
1974	*Graduated from NCA*
1978	*2nd Prize in Punjab Art Exhibition*
1982	*President's Award for designing float for Pakistan Day; many more prizes for same work, later.*
1976 to date	*Employed in Punjab Arts Council (now Dy. Director)*

A sectional view of Lahore Fort



The fact is, however, that the genius of Hanjra found best expression in oil colour and after this exhibition of 1959, he painted almost exclusively in oils.

From the water colours that he painted earlier, one finds that he had a rather cautious and careful approach to the application of colour and did not indulge in much free brushwork, except to some extent in landscapes. In his "Gomti Bridge, Jaunpur, India" and "Delhi Gate, Lahore", and "Manghopir Village", a light and smooth and even first wash covers the different areas in various colours, and over that a second wash is applied, wherever darker tones are required, again very smooth and even. There is neither multiplicity of strokes nor colours. In his landscapes, especially of mountains, he indulges in more free brush work, making the painting more patchy and more varied in tone and therefore more vibrant.

Hanjra called himself an Impressionist. There is more of this approach in his oil paintings than in water colour. Most of his work however is not Impressionist but smooth and even.

Unlike the Impressionists, he loved to paint scenes (whether street scenes or mountain scenes) in subdued light and very often in early morning light or even in haze. In these paintings, noteworthy was his control of light, so that all the colours had one low uniform tone. To enliven the whole scene, he would show some area directly under sunlight, like a mountain peak. Again, the relationship between the tones of these areas directly under sunlight and the rest, would be just right, with no jump or jerk or jar in the distribution of tones. His work is highly finished, the sort no longer done and out of favour with modern taste.

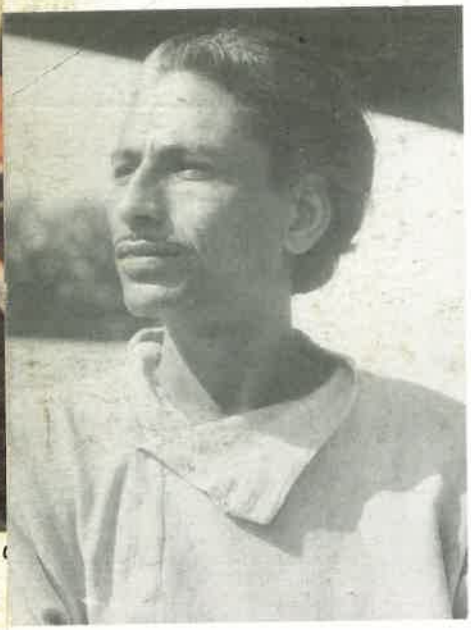


Kashmiri woman in traditional finery

Sunlight falls on Gilgit snow-peaks



JAMEEL AHMAD



Jameel Ahmad

It was in June, 1960 that Jameel hit the headlines. The papers were full of stories
the new artist discovered in the slums of Karachi. Some good-hearted people helped hi
with painting material so that he did not have to draw with charcoal taken from th
hearth on which his meals were cooked, or to paint with juices pressed from leaves ar
flowers.

The story made good copy but Jameel was sick of the exaggerated propaganda. H
deeply appreciated the help and friendship he received but resented being treated as
freak, as a subject for sensational reporting. "Everyone writes about my rags and abo
the hut in which I lived", he complained, "but no one has so far written about my wo
which is the important thing."

Jameel was the victim of modern publicity. But if one only took the trouble
studying his work and finding out his ideas on art, one was well rewarded, for Jame
had a fresh approach to the subject, uninfluenced by formal education. He nursed h
passion for beauty secretly for years without approaching anyone for help or guidanc
His teacher was only nature. He would observe the ripples on the surface of water ar
try to copy the rhythm and flow of the lines. He would also note that the ripples we
most prominent near the edge of the pool and not in the centre, so that reflections
objects in the centre were quite clear and unruffled. He would also observe the plants ar
bushes overhanging the water. The tips that dip into the water seemed to spread ar
enlarge in the reflection. It was fascinating to hear him talk of what he had seen ar
observed and learnt from nature, and then to look at his lovely landscapes.

For example, there was an eight foot long panel showing a Punjabi village scene w
three mud houses in a row, and a long pond in the foreground, some trees on one si
and shrubs growing in the water at bottom left. It was painted in a subdued tone, in blu
and greys and greens. There was neither too much emphasis on the third dimension r
on the play of light and shade, though of course, these aspects were indicated. It wa
very simple, straightforward and realistic approach. But the sensitivity and subtlen
with which the painting was rendered gave it the charm of a rustic maiden, witho
makeup and adornment.

The houses were painted in clear outline, with colours applied flat but with ju
enough variation of tone to suggest the texture of mud walls and play of light. It w
naive without being incompetent, primitive without being crude. The reflections of
houses and doors in the water were uncanny in the truth of observation and convinci
rendering in colour. The whole picture had a certain colour scheme and overall tonal
set by the blue-grey of the houses but the shrub overhanging the pool in the bottom
corner was in light orange. This struck a slightly discordant note, which gently enliver
the quiet tone of the rest of the picture. A painting like this hanging in some bu
conference hall or noisy lobby could bring soothing thoughts of nature and simple ru
life and could instil peace and serenity in the mind of the onlooker.

Then, he painted two companion pictures of much smaller size., one showing
woodland scene at dusk and the other at dawn. Jameel said that he had tried to obse
carefully the difference between these two times of the day and had tried to depict th
in the paintings. In the picture of dusk there was a pensive and sad character. The tr
were painted in dark blue and dark grey, while the rays of the setting sun falling on
tree trunks were reddish yellow

The scene of dawn, although equally dark, had a slightly brighter and m
transparent green used for the trees. The highlights on the tree trunks were whiter a
less red than in the evening scene. The light in the morning scene had a soft pea
quality while in the evening scene it was tinged wih red. The difference betwee
slightly sad and a slightly cheerful scene was very subtly suggested by means that
difficult to analyse but easy to feel.

JAMEEL AHMAD

1960	*First solo exhibition (organised by International Women's Club, Karachi) at Hotel Metropole, Karachi.*
1961	*Exhibition at Alhamra, Lahore.*
1962	*Exhibition in the Baggage Shed at Chittagong port.*
1963	*Exhibition at USIS, Sylhet.*
1982	*Died at Karachi.*

Jameel's love of nature took him to Bengal (then East Pakistan) where he wandered in the Sunderbans. He was enamoured of the long thin curved boats that looked like the crescent moon and which were seen on all the rivers and lakes of the region. He painted this subject on many canvases and the massing of these crescent shapes gave a marked design quality to the picture.

Jameel's largest and finest painting also represented a scene in Bengal. It was a 6 ft. x 5 ft. painting showing two thatched huts with a large tank next to them and lush greenery in the foreground. The huts and a man standing by the tank were shown reflected in the water. The huts were well composed between the trunks of two tall trees. The foliage of the trees and the shrubbery was viridian green flecked with touches of yellow to show the highlights. The trees in the distance were bluish green. The painting is in the collection of. Mr. Suleman Ghanchi of Karachi. (See below)

Then he also painted a huge mural which can still be seen in the KPT Hydraulic Model Lab on Queen's Road, Karachi. It shows a number of tall maidens wearing long flowing gowns with low necks.

Jameel had to bear serious hardships and a grave tragedy towards the end of his life. He did not live long enough to benefit by the boom that took place in the art world of Karachi in the mid-eighties, otherwise the propitious circumstances could have led to much greater development of his art. He died in the early 80s and no one has yet filled the void he left in Karachi of a dedicated painter of landscapes in oils.



Verdant Bengal

Sylvan scene with thatched huts



IJAZUL HASSAN



Ijazul Hassan

Ijazul Hassan studied at the St. Martin School of Art, London, in 1962, when he was only twentytwo and held solo exhibitions of his work at Rawalpindi in 1966 and at Lahore in 1967 but in that year he went to Cambridge University for two years to study English Literature. His attention was divided between art and literature and he was able to hold only two solo exhibitions of his work from 1967 to 1980.

About his work in the late 60s and the 70s, he has written:

"The political movements in the late sixties and the seventies, particularly the students and the working class movements, provided a great encouragement to the artists who maintained that art should not serve a social elite but should portray life, people and the ideas of the time. My own works of this period are imbued with some of these sentiments. They make an attempt to depict important images and events, and express the aspirations of the people, in an unambiguous manner, with a sense of immediacy."

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

He uses some other pet devices to organize the subject compactly. For example, he paints a section of the foliage of a tree. It is structurally almost formless. So, he divides the picture into three vertical panels by imposing two black bars or white strips on the scene. In another painting, he has shown two big branches of ferns against a blurred garden background. Again, he divides the scene into two vertical panels by fitting it within a frame of black bars.

In some other paintings he divides the picture into three or four horizontal panels by some method. For example, in one picture, he looks at a garden scene from a high point. In this way, one flower bed appears to rise close on top of another. Below is a clump of tangled plants of thin stems, then a small area of lawn, then a bed of large-leaved pyramidical plants, then a low garden wall, and above it the last and fourth panel in which a section of the foliage of trees can be seen.

In another painting, he has painted a few ferns in the foreground and in the blurred background is a barely suggested garden scene. This has been divided somewhat arbitrarily into horizontal panels and given different colours.

The biggest and most ambitious painting executed by him shows the upper section of a laburnum tree (amaltas) laden with bunches of golden flowers. This is very typical of him and shows his weak and strong points. As in his other paintings, a strong light is playing on the main subject, which is in the foreground, while all the background is in shadow and painted bluish green and purple. True to nature, the tree is completely leafless when it is in bloom. There are two big boughs and a trellis of thin branches on which the bunches of golden flowers are hanging as inverted cones. The big boughs, the thin branches and the bunches of flowers are all brightly lit. The scores of bunches, which are the chief attraction of the picture, are all equally bright, equally near and equally clear. Perspective has been sacrificed in the interest of decorative effect.

About his own work, he has written:

"Presently, I have been doing mostly landscapes or rather pictures of trees. All of them are about the common unpampered species growing on the road side or in some neglected backyard. Sometimes a simple object evolves into an image which is vividly expressive of a larger meaning and a social significance. A visually dead laburnum bursting into life with a riot of yellow showers, a grand old juniper dying next to a lake,

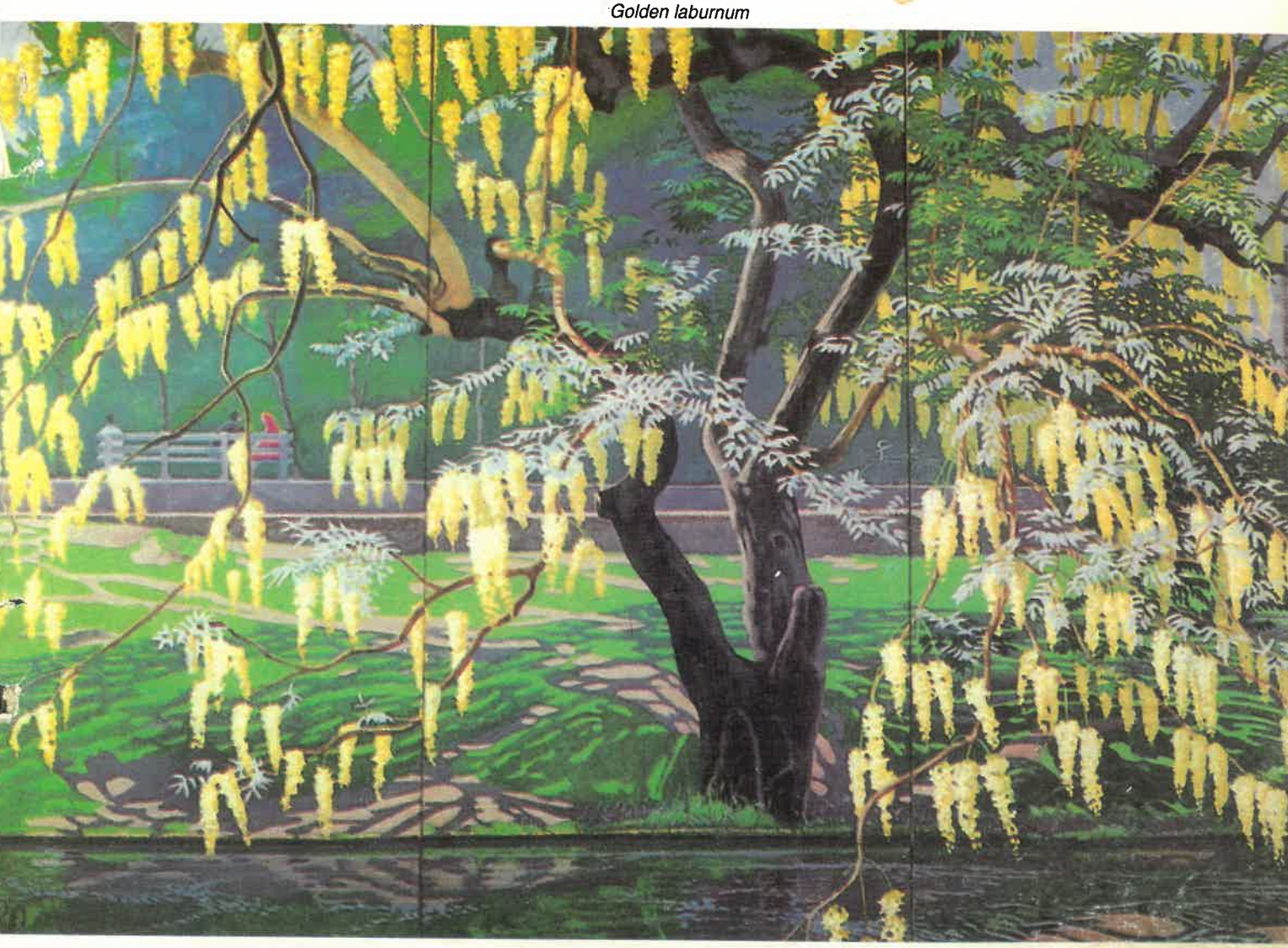
IJAZUL HASSAN

1940 (Mar.)	*Born at Lahore.*
1962	*Studied at St. Martin's School of Arts, London.*
1966	*Taught Academics at National College of Art, Lahore. First one man show (at Rawalpindi).*
1991	*Book "Painting in Pakistan" by him, published.*

an invincible wild 'beri' tree with fresh shoots sprouting from limbs that were ruthlessly chopped the previous season, are a few examples where common sights and objects reveal a meaning and social significance not apparent at first."

The social significance that he has tried to read in his paintings is certainly not apparent at first and hardly so at last. The paintings are a fairly literal and factual record which are enlivened by strong lights, extreme contrasts of foreground and background, certain layout devices that firm up the composition and a meticulous technique.

Golden laburnum



PIRZADA NAJAM-UL-HASAN



Najam

Landscape painting and, to a lesser extent street scene painting, is the most popular form of art expression in Lahore but Najam is about the only water colour landscape painter there.

That is by no means his only distinction. He has developed during the last ten years a style that is unique and enables him to stand out from all others practising this genre.

Pirzada Najam-ul-Hassan is a product of the Karachi School of Art from where he graduated in 1976. No doubt he benefited from the expertise in water colour technique of his then Principal, Mansur Rahi, but the style of landscape painting is wholly Najam's own.

Again, it is no detraction from Najam's merit to mention that after graduation he lived many years in Karachi and associated closely with a group of young artists who went out every weekend for on the spot painting of the greenery in Malir and the boats in the Fish Harbour. Prominent among these was Abdul Hayee, who has become well-known among the water-colour landscapists of Karachi,while with him too were M. Yusuf, Manzoor-ul-Hussain and Mukhtar Haider, all working in more or less the same realistic style. Ghalib Baqar and Zahin Ahmed too are of this group but both have struck off quite different paths in landscape painting.

He began hesitantly by painting dainty little pictures with just a swelling black rain cloud filling the broad sky, a very low horizon and just a few bands of colour in the foreground, or maybe, one tree. The striking feature of the work was the dark blue cloud that seemed soaked with vapour, seeping and fading away at the edges and fairly dripping - this being sometimes indicated with short scraping strokes made with a sharp point or the back end of the brush.

The adroit use of a loaded brush on wet paper in one final and fresh stroke was one source of pleasure. Another was the association all of us have with rising dark monsoon clouds as the harbingers of cool rains and the season of festivity. All our popular age-old songs are full of reference to "kaaley kaaley badal-wa".

The apparent ease with which the picture seemed to have been dashed off gave it the quality of a lightly whistled ditty. But of course, the clean, unsullied, unsmudged effect,

Stark tree and dark clouds.



PIRZADA NAJAMUL HASAN

951 *Born at Lahore*
978 *Diploma from Karachi School of Art.*
979 *1st solo show (at Karachi).*
Lives in Lahore.

must have come with years of practice. It is a quality one misses in many more elaborately and laboriously executed water colour landscapes which encompass much more but do not bring off the effect of the first and virgin stroke or the dripping wetness of the quintessential water colour. This lightness of touch, this lyrical simplicity and spontaneity is a natural gift, like the tone and timbre of the voice of a singer.

One or two other recurring features of Najam's work are desolate scenes with a lone bare leafless tree, rising high into the dark clouds. Such paintings have a strange mysterious touch and even strike a deeply disconsolate note. Perhaps it reflects some hidden aspect of the artist's personality, who is a loner, though a very social person.



Black clouds and a leafless tree

It was noted by an English critic writing in the Birmingham Post in 1992, when Najam held a solo exhibition there, that he is surprised to find a preponderance of greens and greys in paintings coming from Pakistan, meaning that the bright sun here should have created more vibrant greens and radiant colours. He is right that the torrid sun of Pakistan is nowhere seen in Najam's work nor lush green foliage nor gorgeous flowering trees. But it may be noted that Najam has mostly painted the countryside around Lahore and that is not an area of lush green vegetation. The common trees there are the kikar (acacia) and sheesham (tahli) whose foliage is grey-green and further muted by the enveloping dust. He should also remember that in real life clouded scenes are more attractive to us than sun-smitten landscapes, though no doubt the play of sunlight can be most appealing in a painting. Some play of light can be found in the work of Najam, especially on the trunks of trees or on the edges of mud houses or behind and between dark clouds. But then the whole long tradition of our miniature and mural art has led us to overlook sunlight and to paint all things in a subdued light. Najam could well take up this suggestion and try to exploit the play of light more in his landscapes. After all, the whole teaching of the Impressionist School was centred mainly on this, and that teaching is still alive.



Hope of life comes to leafless tree

In his 1989 exhibition at Karachi, he put up large paintings that he executed during his wanderings in the desert of Cholistan and Bahawalpur, and also many scenes of the pine-covered hills of Murree. Two groups of pictures were specially prominent, namely, architectural subjects and the Bagh-e-Jinnah trees. In the first were old crumbling buildings of Uch and some inside the Lahore Fort, each painting concentrating on one main feature, like one burji (cupola) or one projecting balcony (from Old Anarkali). The other group is that of the huge hundred-year old trees of Bagh-e-Jinnah, with their deep dark foliage and gnarled trunks.

No longer does he drop a blob of colour on wet paper and let it seep around into the form of a tree. Rather, in these cases he has tried to capture the form of the grand old trees, trunk and foliage and the aura of age. Still, even in these pictures, he takes a small section of the view, often one tree only or one and a half. He needs to be more daring to paint broader views in which his ability to compose many features and to show varying distances will come into play.



Rain clouds delight man and beast.

SHAKEEL SIDDIQUI



Shakeel Siddiqui

Still Life Painters

Shakeel Siddiqui, who was born in 1951, spent the years 1970 to 1973 in the USA where he studied art at the Art Students' League of New York and majored in portraiture under the guidance of eminent portrait painter Robert Brockman. He was deeply influenced by the realistic work of Andrew Wyeth and the Super-realistic work of Ken Davis.

His art studies were completed on his return to Karachi and he obtained his Diploma in Art from the Central Institute of Art and Craft in 1975.

Having majored in portraiture, he made figure paintings and put up an exhibition in I 978 at Gallery 2 in Karachi but it was a failure.

Therefore, he turned to painting still life and in 1980 painted a small table covered with a lace table cloth. On the table was a plate with two toasts and a knife and a bottle of jam, as also a newspaper. The subject was painted meticulously, in microscopic detail. It became at once widely popular and he has had to paint two similar paintings with lace table cloth and a few objects on the table.

Proceeding still further in the choice of the most unimpressive and ordinary things to paint, he selected a basket woven with thin brown twigs (1983). The specificity of the

Lace table-cloth



SHAKEEL SIDDIQUI

1951 (May 26) Born in Karachi.
1970-72 Studied with Art Students' League of New York.
1975 Graduated from Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi. First solo exhibition.
1990 to date Lives in Sharjah.

basket is truthfully caught in all detail and the image has been forcefully projected in saturated colour and with strong light effects and shadows. Such a forceful and deeply colourful image could not have been caught by the camera. However, this picture lacks the element of composition which raises a picture to the level of art and in which the various elements pull and push each other and create tensions.

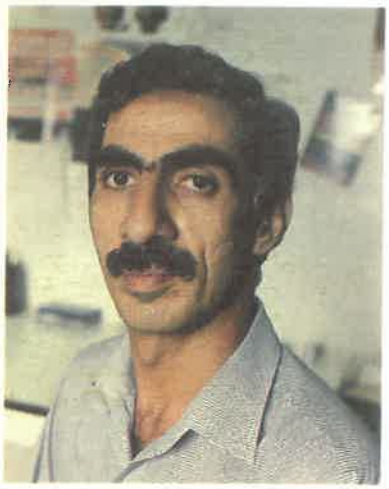
The finest painting he has made and the one which achieves the most perfect illusion is a bookshelf which has been painted life size and from edge to edge of the canvas, so that there is nothing in the picture which gives a clue to its unreality. The books were untidily arranged on the shelf and some were shown with frayed binding and discoloured covers, some standing upright in the shelf or slanting and some lying flat on the side. This writer can attest to the perfect illusion achieved by the picture when it was first hung up on show in an exhibition.

When all is said and done, such work is lacking in creative imagination because an exact representation of an object is too static and "doesn't do anything". Pictures in which there is one single object are quite dull. Those with a number of objects involve some composition and that introduces many elements of balance and proportion, rhythm and flow, tension and dynamics as one object is played against the other in respect of its size and placement and colour and light.

For the last three or four years he has been living in Sharjah where no doubt, his art is better rewarded but there he is painting portraits, not still life.



Deceptive door



Akram Spaul

AKRAM SPAUL

Akram Spaul emerged suddenly on the art scene of Pakistan when he held an exhibition of about twentyfive paintings at Karachi in June, 1989.

Some of it was still life in the usual sense of close up views of objects like chairs, shoes, bags, clothes, towels but some of it was different. For example, he would paint a chair but with a large background of the interior of a house. Or he would paint a towel hanging on a railing and show also the two doors and the wall behind it. Or, a cycle is painted with many windows behind it, some open. Thus, he does not paint just one small object, as is usually done in still life but a small section of the background with it. He even goes further and in many paintings shows the outdoor view through the door which he has painted.

Naturally, he cannot display his super-realistic skill in painting the water and the cloudy sky and the outdoor scene of trees in the same way in which he can do when painting a chair or a towel or a shoe, close up.

Where he has focussed closely on one or a few objects, he is in the tradition of still life but where he broadens the view to take in a section of the background, a part of the interior of houses, he is creating something different.

These house interiors, with glimpses of the outer scene, no doubt create variety and enliven the picture. Deceptive realism which "fools the eye" is not found in them.

On the other hand, the fact that in these interior scenes there are never any people, gives a deserted and even an eerie look to them.

The best of his work are still the closely focussed pictures in which he reduplicates with uncanny skill not only the form and colour but the texture of the object and the shadows cast by it and the exact effects of light. No doubt, it is literal and factual work but the way it is composed turns even drab reality into something artistic.



Venetian blind

AKRAM SPAUL

1947 *Born*
1972 *Diploma from Central Art Institute, Karachi.*



Sports cycle

ASKARI MIAN IRANI



Askari Mian Irani

Askari graduated from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1967 and held solo exhibitions at Karachi in 1969 and 1970. It was however his solo exhibition of 1983 at Karachi that attracted some notice. Even till that date he had not found his metier and was literally floundering in a sea of colours.

In this '83 exhibition he had put up pure abstract pictures which are called monoprints because only one print of a kind can be taken out, unlike other printing techniques, like etching and lithograph, in which many prints of the same picture can be taken out. Colours are applied on a plate and pressed on paper to take out an impression. If oil or water colour is used, a second application of colours is not possible but Askari used some fast drying inks and applied colour a second and even a third time. It was no more than a game of colours which even children often play. In the hands of a trained artist it was bound to have some charm but it was all rather futile and meaningless because the artist cannot fully control the effect.

Askari had the good sense to abandon this and hit upon a new idea which he has pursued from 1984 to date (1994). That idea was to use the form of the traditional "Naqsh" which is a religious formula of many kinds, made up of Arabic letters or figures or words or holy verses or all, and supposed to have great potency in bringing material or spiritual benefits to the person who keeps it. They are most often in a chequers pattern but sometimes as a circle radially divided.

Askari also hit upon a title which he has used for his exhibitions from 1984 to 1992: "Naqsh-e-Kohna Ba-rang-e-Askari". which means The Olden Naqsh in the Colours (or form) of Askari.

At first he simply painted a piece of paper, old and faded, cracked here and there and frayed at the edges. On this he wrote out the holy words of some traditional Naqsh. Thus proper calligraphy was used but given an antique look. This was the tentative new style that he launched in 1984 at an exhibition in the National College of Arts where he was teaching.

However, when he held his next exhibition at a public gallery in Lahore in 1985, he had adopted a much more sophisticated form. Later, he hardly ever wrote continuous texts but used single Arabic letters and set them in the magical form of one of those traditional Naqshs, most often squares within a big square as in chequers. He also used a border or filled the whole ground with repetitions of a favourite design of the olden Mughal architects, used especially on floors. This was an eight pointed star made by drawing one square over the other so that one cuts the corners of the other equally. When



Visions of a bygone world of beauty

ASKARI MIAN IRANI

1940	Born, Saharanpur (India)
1967	Graduated from NCA
1969	First one-man show
1976 to date	Asstt. Professor at NCA.



Jameel Ahmad

JAMEEL AHMAD

It was in June, 1960 that Jameel hit the headlines. The papers were full of stories the new artist discovered in the slums of Karachi. Some good-hearted people helped hi with painting material so that he did not have to draw with charcoal taken from th hearth on which his meals were cooked, or to paint with juices pressed from leaves ar flowers.

The story made good copy but Jameel was sick of the exaggerated propaganda. H deeply appreciated the help and friendship he received but resented being treated as freak, as a subject for sensational reporting. "Everyone writes about my rags and abou the hut in which I lived", he complained, "but no one has so far written about my wor which is the important thing."

Jameel was the victim of modern publicity. But if one only took the trouble c studying his work and finding out his ideas on art, one was well rewarded, for Jamee had a fresh approach to the subject, uninfluenced by formal education. He nursed hi passion for beauty secretly for years without approaching anyone for help or guidance His teacher was only nature. He would observe the ripples on the surface of water an try to copy the rhythm and flow of the lines. He would also note that the ripples wer most prominent near the edge of the pool and not in the centre, so that reflections o objects in the centre were quite clear and unruffled. He would also observe the plants an bushes overhanging the water. The tips that dip into the water seemed to spread an enlarge in the reflection. It was fascinating to hear him talk of what he had seen an observed and learnt from nature, and then to look at his lovely landscapes.

For example, there was an eight foot long panel showing a Punjabi village scene wit three mud houses in a row, and a long pond in the foreground, some trees on one side and shrubs growing in the water at bottom left. It was painted in a subdued tone, in blues and greys and greens. There was neither too much emphasis on the third dimension no on the play of light and shade, though of course, these aspects were indicated. It was a very simple, straightforward and realistic approach. But the sensitivity and subtleness with which the painting was rendered gave it the charm of a rustic maiden, without makeup and adornment.

The houses were painted in clear outline, with colours applied flat but with just enough variation of tone to suggest the texture of mud walls and play of light. It was naive without being incompetent, primitive without being crude. The reflections of the houses and doors in the water were uncanny in the truth of observation and convincing rendering in colour. The whole picture had a certain colour scheme and overall tonality set by the blue-grey of the houses but the shrub overhanging the pool in the bottom left corner was in light orange. This struck a slightly discordant note, which gently enlivened the quiet tone of the rest of the picture. A painting like this hanging in some busy conference hall or noisy lobby could bring soothing thoughts of nature and simple rustic life and could instil peace and serenity in the mind of the onlooker.

Then, he painted two companion pictures of much smaller size., one showing a woodland scene at dusk and the other at dawn. Jameel said that he had tried to observe carefully the difference between these two times of the day and had tried to depict these in the paintings. In the picture of dusk there was a pensive and sad character. The trees were painted in dark blue and dark grey, while the rays of the setting sun falling on the tree trunks were reddish yellow

The scene of dawn, although equally dark, had a slightly brighter and more transparent green used for the trees. The highlights on the tree trunks were whiter and less red than in the evening scene. The light in the morning scene had a soft pearly quality while in the evening scene it was tinged wih red. The difference between a slightly sad and a slightly cheerful scene was very subtly suggested by means that are difficult to analyse but easy to feel.

JAMEEL AHMAD

1960	First solo exhibition (organised by International Women's Club, Karachi) at Hotel Metropole, Karachi.
1961	Exhibition at Alhamra, Lahore.
1962	Exhibition in the Baggage Shed at Chittagong port.
1963	Exhibition at USIS, Sylhet.
1982	Died at Karachi.



Peacock feather often used as marker in holy book

a large number of such stars are placed side by side, the space between the stars also takes on another beautiful geometrical form.

All this total design of arabesque and Arabic letters was filled with dim dark colours that had a mystical look because some parts were in light and some in shadow and all the colours had an old faded look like the patina on antique objects .

In his 1988 show at the V. M. Gallery in Karachi. he introduced yet another element into his calligraphic creations and that was gateways and arches and panelled walls of Mughal architecture, all in the form of front elevation only, like a paper cutout. He also furtively and unprominently introduced a human figure, male or female, in Mughal dress. Even small equestrian figures were used, to build up the old world atmosphere. The square chequers design of the Naqsh was visible here and there and also the holy words or letters in the squares or on the border. He had made more daring use of large areas of saturated colour on the canvas, which was tipped upward or downward to make the colour flow in thin lines that looked like fringes or trellis.

In his September, 1989 exhibition at the Danish Gallery in Karachi, he increased greatly the figurative elements. In one painting called "Naqsh-e-Fath" or Naqsh of Victory, he shows armed horsemen charging, dimly seen in the background of panels of holy words. In another called "Naqsh-e-Haq-o-Batil" or the Naqsh of Good and Evil, he uses the squares of the Naqsh format to paint in different squares symbols of the Battle of Kerbala, such as the Tomb of Hazrat Ali, or the impression of a blood stained palm or a line of charging horsemen

All this is dimly visible within a multicoloured texture and a network of minutely written holy words, such as Allah. A mysterious word which looks like Ta'aha is also often written and repeated in many squares in quite big size. Thus calligraphy and painting have been very closely merged.

Hawking on horseback



Princess and peacocks



KAUKAB BARNI



Kaukab

A modest, soft-spoken wisp of a girl who obtained a Diploma in Graphic Art from the Karachi School of Art in 1981, worked quietly but assiduously over the years and towards the end of 1994 her talent was sufficiently recognized for her to be invited on a three-month educational tour of the UK as a Nuffield Fellow and to conduct a short course for children on Asian Art.

After graduation, she tried her hand at painting birds and found a ready demand for them. However, the urge to paint in a modern way led her to create in 1982 Cubistic work in which earthen vases were used as the subject. The vases were at times broken into sherds, somewhat as the human figure is broken by the Cubists, where required. It was then reconstructed in intriguing and puzzling ways to create original compositions.

By 1986 Kaukab had tried many variations of this subject of pottery composed in a Cubist manner, and felt she had almost exhausted the possibilities. By this time the artists of Pakistan and also the public felt surfeited with Cubism and abstraction, which led them to seek roots in the soil.

Kaukab too decided to look around her and not across the frontiers. She discovered the beauty of Sindhi handicrafts and fell in love with it. There was the maroon and indigo blue block-printed sheet called ajrak with its star-spangled designs; and the laboriously put together quilted Rilli made of pieces of many coloured cloth in ingenious combinations; and gorgeously embroidered fronts of women's dresses called gajj; not to mention glazed pottery, wood-carving and inlay and much more.

She began using the motifs and designs of these ancient crafts in her paintings, first hesitantly, as only a small part of the canvas, then more and more, until the whole canvas was covered with them. So they became the main subject and not just an element in the composition. She soon discovered that the centuries old association of our people with these motifs had given them an emotional attraction and an evocative power that the cubes and cones and cylinders of modern art could never match.

Of course, she did not simply copy the whole piece of handicraft just as it was. The motifs and designs were traditional but the whole arrangement and layout was guided by a modern sensibility. Also in the background of these paintings again she used rectangles and other such abstract forms as she had used in her pottery series.

Therefore, this new series using Sindhi artifacts, was an extension of the same basic idea but with different elements. In place of pottery she had introduced the designs of

Sindhi mirror-work embroidery, part pasted, part painted.



KAUKAB BARNI

1958 Born at Lahore
1981 Diploma from Karachi School of Art
1982-94 Taught art in Habib Public School (Girls) Karachi, and then in Grammar School, Karachi.
1994 Went to UK on a Nuffield Fellowship. Married and settled in USA.



Use of Sindhi embroidery motifs

traditional fabrics, embroidery and tiles as the "real" element, while the abstract element was provided by the same geometrical rectangles, triangles, polygons and sometimes by the modern mannerism of dripping and free-flowing paint.

Actually, both are abstract but because of long familiarity, the traditional designs have become real and substantial for us, while the modern abstract forms of geometrical shape, seem one degree removed from reality and still in the realm of ideas and not "facts".

This palpable realness of the traditional designs was also helped by the uncanny skill with which Kaukab reproduced the designs in paint. As one observer, writing in the "Star" remarked:

"The red, yellow and white patterns of Sindh are painted on the canvas with such precision that one could almost reach out and touch them to find if they are the real thing or painted."

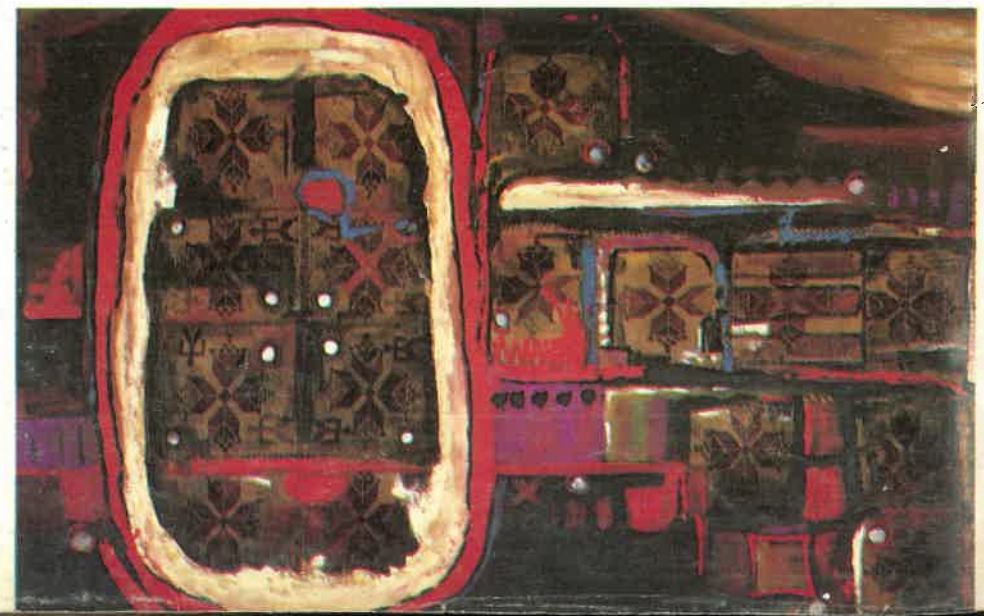
But this exact copying of the design at places is one of the tricks she employs to puzzle the viewer who sees them sometimes in sharp focus and sometimes diffused, some are bathed in one overall tone and some in another. Parts of a design or one whole in the composition may be deliberately smudged or clouded with chalky grey or darkened a smoky blue-black, for variation.

Her most creative and innovative paintings are those in which she uses only the elements of Sindhi designs and with these builds up her own compositions. For example, there is one painting in which these traditional motifs, such as chevrons (arrow-heads) or diamonds (lozenges) or ladders (two parallel lines crossed serially) or H forms and others, have been used in vertical rows. The background is treated differently. Using light colour above and dark below, she has divided the space into large oblongs above and small ones below.

This use of elements of traditional designs in combination with modern colouristic space division, struck a new chord of artistic sensibility. It was so widely appreciated that she was invited to hold a solo exhibition of her new work at Islamabad in the "Originals" Gallery in 1987. This she did and received very favourable reviews.

Kaukab's use of collage had endless variety. She actually pasted some of the colourful Sindhi embroidery on part of the canvas and painted the rest so as to merge the two imperceptibly. Sometimes the painted part matched the pasted piece and at other times it was only an echo or a shadow. This teasing ambiguity was increased by sometimes over-painting the pasted pieces so that the two became one.

Images, concrete and conceptual



RIFFAT ALVI



Riffat Alvi

Riffat Alvi graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Karachi School of Art in 1973 but she came up with her first solo exhibition in 1985. What triggered off her imagination was her work, 1984-86, as Product Designer on a UN Project for the Development of Handicrafts in Sindh. As part of her duties she conducted UN experts and other foreign visitors to the famous archaeological site of Moenjodaro where a wealth of ancient handicraft products has been discovered, apart from much else.

The 60 canvases she displayed were all abstract, mostly soft-edged oblongs each in one bright colour, against a blank background, like Rothko, but she always added at the bottom or in one corner some glimpses of the old ruins or suggestions of the seals and other famous relics of that lost civilization.

The next year she put up quite a different solo show in which she had scraped graphite sticks (silver, gold and copper) on dark pastel paper, creating ribbons of metallic colour, twisting and floating in rhythmic curves and meanders, spirals and zigzags. Variety was created by placing thickly embossed embroidery in old designs under the paper and rubbing graphite to produce rubbings of the design.

What brought a revolution in her work was her visit to Zimbabwe in 1991. There she met Helen Liros, a Greek-born African woman artist who was using the richly variegated African soil as a medium for painting. Riffat tried to do this herself and brought some of the African soil with her to Pakistan. She also tried to find different coloured soils in Moenjodaro, Bhanbore and other ancient sites. These she used to paint a new series, in which, rather than oblongs, she used a variety of broad bands of colour, mostly straight but some in swinging curves. These she exhibited at Islamabad in December 1991. Again, the canvases were given an aura and mystery of the past by stamping some old motifs or designs or simply sign language like that found in the ancient sites. It was the sweeping strokes of colour, sometimes edged with a second colour (laced double on the brush) and sometimes scrapingly leaving bubbles and blank textures and lines, that enticed the eye, more than the mystifying ancient symbols.

Her January 1994 exhibition showed more complexity in her work. Compositions, were made up of both broad bands and large oblongs, mostly straight-sided and right-angular, with much more tonal variation and bolder use of ancient symbols and images.

RIFFAT ALVI

1946 (Feb.)	*Born (India)*
1973	*Diploma in Fine Arts from Karachi School of Art.*
1974	*2nd Prize, USSR Consulate Exhibition.*
1975	*1st solo exhibition (Karachi).*
1986	*Visited UK, USA and Canada.*
1987 to date	*Director V.M. Art Gallery, Karachi.*
1988	*Shield for best water colour at Asian Exhibition at Osaka.*
1991	*Visited Zimbabwe, Held exhibition at Harare.*

Love letter from Moenjodaro



Intimations of the past





Bashir Ahmad

Bashir Ahmad

Lahore was for centuries a flourishing centre of miniature painting. Three eminent elderly artists were working in this style in the early years of Pakistan: Ustad Haji Mohammad Sharif, Ustad Shujaullah and Ustad Aftab Ahmed Khan. They died, respectively, in 1978, 1980 and 1984.

Today four of their pupils are keeping the traditions of this art alive in Lahore. They are Bashir Ahmad who teaches this art in the National College of Art, Lahore; Khalid Saeed Butt who teaches this subject in the Punjab University Fine Arts Department, Lahore; Salahuddin, who used to work in the Lahore Museum; and Shakeel Ahmad, who practices the art privately. A fifth artist, who also works in Lahore and teaches art in the Queen Mary's College for Women, is Munira Alam.

Bashir Ahmad is the most prolific and significant artist out of all these. He was born at Lahore in 1953. He studied miniature painting under Ustad Shujaullah at the National College of Art, Lahore, and obtained a diploma in 1974. After the Ustad retired from service, in 1977 Bashir Ahmad took his place as teacher of miniature painting at the National College of Art. However, he continued to learn from the Ustad till the death of the latter in 1980. He came into prominence after he won the Chughtai Award in the National Exhibition of 1980 organized by Pakistan National Council of the Arts. He also won the First Prize for Drawing in the First Art Biennale of Pakistan, 1987.

He has learnt from his Ustad (teacher) to paint in the Mughal, Indo-Persian. Rajput and Kangra styles but he has a predilection for Kangra because it is simpler, less ornate, less formal and closer to life. As common in Kangra paintings. Bashir also paints many pictures of Krishna and Radha and the Gopis, besides many daily life scenes, typical of Kangra, as against the more formal scenes of Mughal painting. No doubt, even these daily life scenes show princes and princesses mostly, though occasionally Bashir has painted a shepherdess with her sheep and a peasant girl in front of her fields (Still, in the background, on the upper terrace of a house, can be glimpsed Krishna talking to an old woman). More common are aristocratic scenes like one showing a prince and a princess sitting on an open terrace, with the latter offering a cup of wine to the former. Similarly, there is another painting showing a prince sitting in a garden with a maid

Lady with fan - Turkish style



Asif Jah - Mughal style



Miniature Painters

crouched respectfully in front of him while another maid brings a letter, perhaps a message from his beloved.

He has also painted portraits of Asif Jah and the King of Golconda, Mumtaz Mahal and others.

More than faces, he loves to paint full figures, and more than figures, he loves to paint scenes with two or three figures and a suitable setting or background. His treatment is refined and elegant, not ornate and garish. He does not load his female figures with jewellery nor does he adorn the dresses with lavish designs. The colours also are light and the shading is minimal. The drawing and linework is subtle and the whole work is soft and subdued, rather than flamboyant.

In his paintings, Bashir is strictly following the tradition of the old masters of miniature. As in most miniature painting that is done in modern times, Bashir takes the elements of his pictures from old paintings but makes his own compositions.

However, he has made a notable innovation by making heavily shaded pencil drawings. They are not linear but tonal creations. The style and the subject matter is traditional but it is rendered in pencil, showing not only the outline but all tones, from the lightest to the darkest. Moreover, the pictures are much larger than the usual miniature. Some are 15 x 20 inches, some 20 x 30 inches and some even 36 x 36 inches, like the picture entitled "Night" which won for him the first prize for drawing in the First Art Biennale Pakistan, 1987. The composition of these pictures also is very innovative. They are not perfectly rectangular or square because quite often a cloud sticks out of the edge on the top left and the bottom edge is not straight but follows freely the objects shown in the foreground, such as carpets. In some cases, the bottom line is made to take many angular turns, as in a polygon.

These, pencil drawings are very striking and forceful because they have strong contrast, and the tones range from light grey to jet black. The central figure or figures are set against a very dark background while the figures themselves are in very light tones. Often in these drawings, there is a broad ornamental border on the top and the right edge. This further adds to the asymmetrical character of the composition which is established by the cloud sticking out of the edge on the top right and the multi-angular bottom edge.

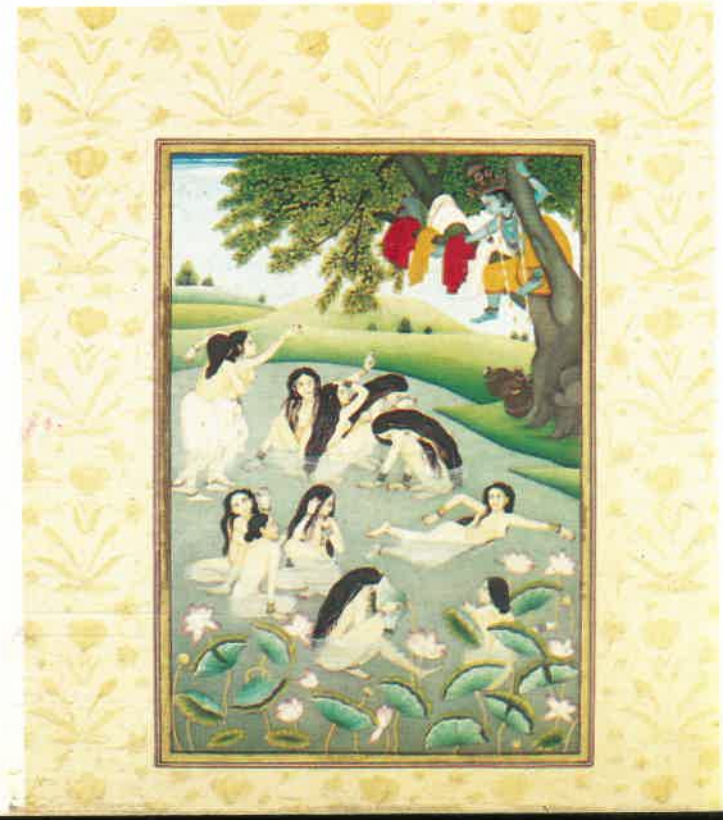


Dalliance (pencil work)

BASHIR AHMAD

1953	*Born at Lahore.*
1974	*Graduated from National College of Art, Lahore, in miniature painting.*
1975-80	*Continued to study under Ustad Shujaullah*
1980	*Won Chughtai Award in National Art Exhibition held at Rawalpindi.*
1977 to date	*Teaching miniature painting at NCA.*

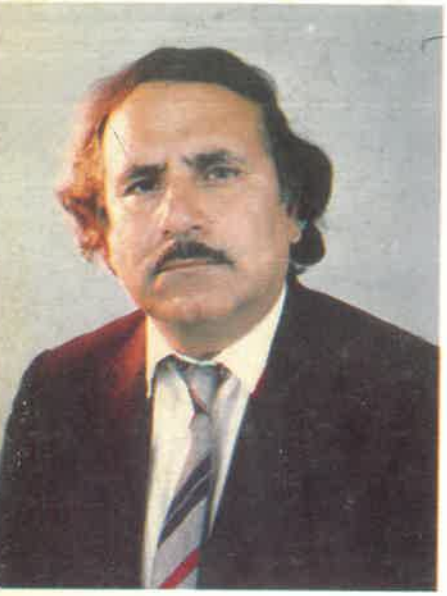
Krishna stealing the clothes of bathing Gopis



Prince with a hookah (pencil work)



Salahuddin



Salahuddin

Salahuddin is another prominent miniaturist. He was born at Lahore in 1939 and got his B.A. degree in 1963. He received his training in miniature painting from Ustad Shujaullah. Later he went to Italy and also to Japan to get training in the preservation and restoration of miniature paintings and in the making of moulds for replicas of statues and art objects. He worked as Restoration and Exhibition Officer in the Lahore Museum for some years. Occasionally, he paints miniatures on paper and ivory in Mughal style.

His paintings on ivory are small oval pictures of Mughal kings and queens. They are painted in a highly ornate style, showing the details of the jewellery, the crown, the throne and the decoration on the dress. This is obviously derivative work in the manner of the later Mughal artists.

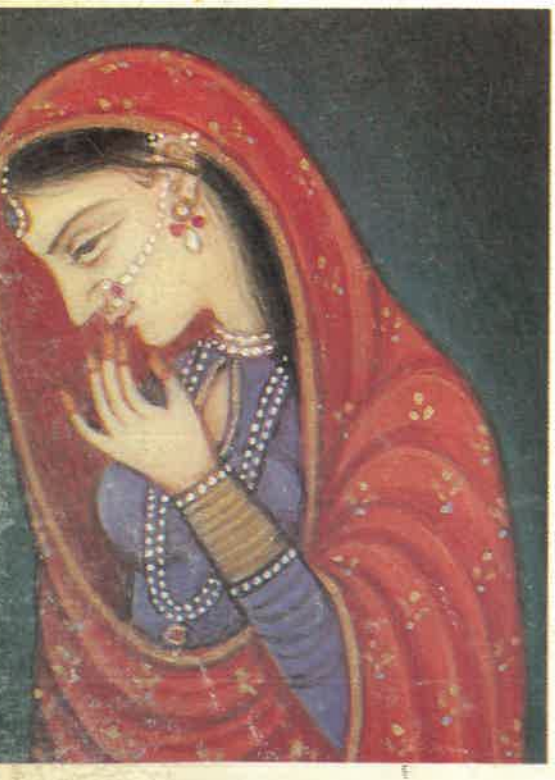
An example of original painting is his picture of the starving Buddha. It is based on the famous statue of the starving Buddha in the Lahore Museum but he has converted it into a painted portrait having a striking personality, individualized and illumined with a halo. The face, however, has no signs of emaciation. Behind is the trunk of the tree under which the Buddha sat to meditate and on either side are bare thin trees that continue the theme of starvation and attrition. It is a meticulously drawn and beautifully composed painting.

SALAHUDDIN

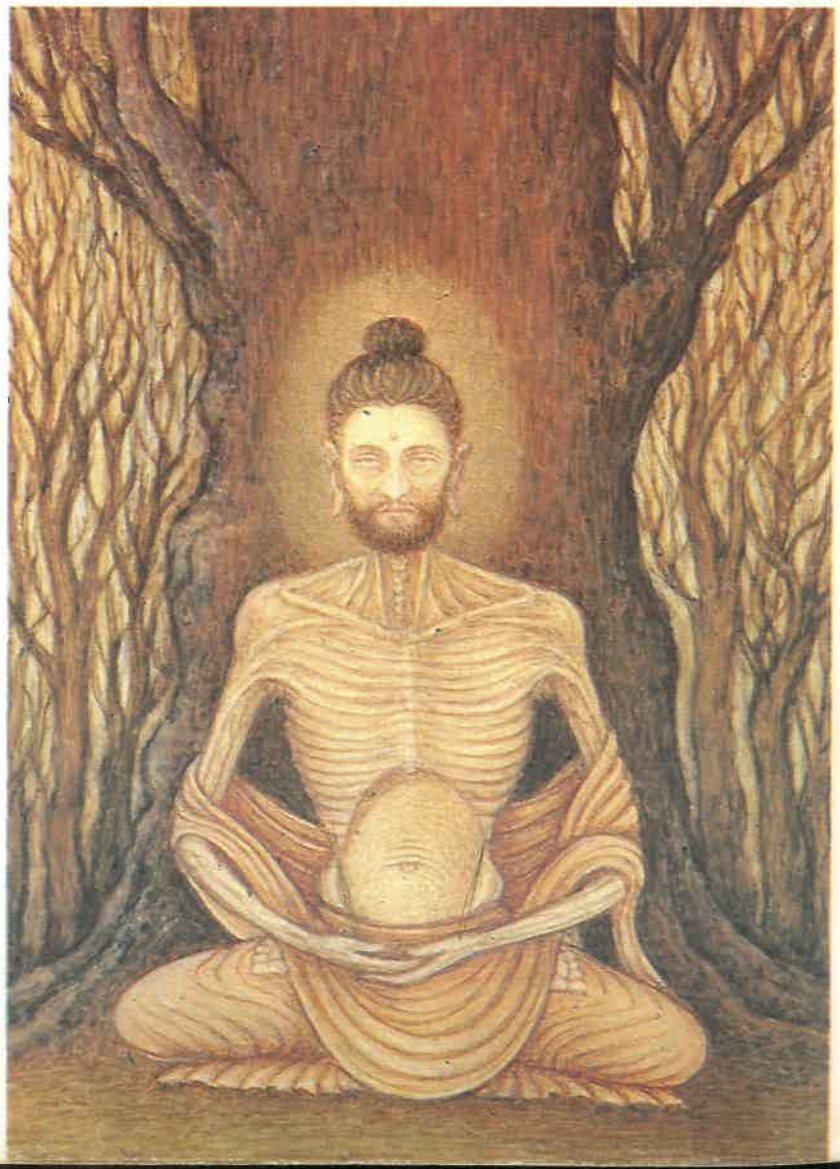
1939 *Born at Lahore.*

1963 *B.A., from Gujrat. M.A. Received training in miniature painting from Ustad Shujaullah. Received training in restorartion of art objects in Italy and Japan. Worked in Lahore Museum. Now Director of Handicraft Complex of Punjab Art Council, Lahore.*

The coy beauty



Fasting Buddha





Khalid Saeed Butt

Khalid Saeed Butt is another very active practitioner of the art of miniature painting. He has been teaching this art in the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University at Lahore since 1980.

He takes pride in the fact that his paintings are not copies from or derived from old paintings, as is the case with most miniature painting done nowadays. Even his subjects are different. He loves to paint landscapes in miniature style. One painting entitled "Under the Banyan Tree" shows a huge banyan tree covering the whole painting. In the miniature style, each leaf is separately painted. Under the tree, he shows a group of peasants sitting and listening to a flute player, as they often do in the villages of the Punjab.

Khalid is very fond of the Pahari School of miniature painting because it is not formal and sober but is free and emotional. Its lines have swing and spontaneity and its colours have depth and richness. The dramatic scene of the painting "Girl Walking in Lightning" is painted in this style, as also the picture "Raga Kamoda". Because he himself plays the sitar, Khalid has painted many musical subjects, such as his picture 'Girl Playing a Musical Instrument".

He considers his biggest achievement to be the painting of 35 miniatures showing the cavalry soldiers of the British Indian Army in the different regimental uniforms that were worn from 1857 to 1947. He was commissioned to do this work by Nawabzada Naushad Ali Khan of Islamabad, who had done the basic research on the subject. The minuteness of detail which is characteristic of miniature painting has been put to good use here to depict the exact history of military uniforms down to the brass buttons and the designs made on the sword scabbards. As historical record, this set of pictures deserves praise for its meticulousness and authenticity but as art it is too stiff and blank and feelingless and starkly realistic.

Wide-spreading banyan tree





Awaiting a tryst.



The maestro

KHALID SAEED BUTT

1950 (Aug. 9)	*Born.*
	M.F.A. from Punjab University.
1980 to date	*Teaching miniature painting in the Fine Arts Deprtment of the Punjab University.*



Munira Alam

Munira Alam

Munira Alam is yet another artist who has been devoting herself to miniature painting. She graduated in Fine Arts from the Peshawar University and obtained her M.A.F. from the Punjab University in 1982. From 1983 to 1986, she taught at Peshawar University but now she is teaching at Queen Mary's College for Women.

She came into prominence in 1983 when she held an exhibition of paintings of the Afghan refugees at the Punjab University, and later she held solo exhibitions of these and other paintings on the same subject at Islamabad (1984) and Karachi (1985).

However, after that, she turned her back on oil painting and began devoting herself to miniature painting because she felt that it was only by striking roots in the soil of our own tradition that she could achieve some genuine and worthwhile results.

The best of Munira's miniatures are those that have a figure with a landscape in the background. The close-up study of the trees in the foreground and the gradually receding planes of the scene that stretches behind, is very effectively rendered.

She is also very fond of painting night scenes. which are also found in old Mughal paintings. Thus, there is a charming picture by Munira in which a girl is shown standing half hidden in a copse of trees at night, waving her henna-coloured hand to bid goodbye to her lover. Another attractive picture shows a woodland scene in moonlight with a forlorn looking girl leaning on a tree and pining for her lover. In both these pictures, the forest at night is very well depicted though the figures are weak.

Credit goes to her for the fact that these pictures are all her original compositions based on her thorough study of the old masters of Mughal, Rajput and Pahari miniatures.

With all these talented people devoting themselves to miniature painting, this art is taking on a new and fresh look and many interesting innovations are being made in it.

MUNIRA ALAM

1957 (Dec. 23) Born at Lahore.
1979 Diploma in Painting (First Class First) from Peshawar University.
1982 M.A. Fine Arts from Punjab University.
1983 Exhibition of paintings of Afghan refugees.
1983-86 Taught in Fine Arts Department of Peshawar University.
1986-89 Taught Fine Arts at Government College for Women, Jhelum
Now (1995) teaching in Queen Mary's College for Women.

Waiting in the wilderness



Welcome letter



Shazia Sikander

The growing popularity of miniature painting among art students was evident from the fact that Shazia's class of 1993 was the bigggest ever, majoring in miniature from the NCA. Prof. Bashir Ahmad, who has been a student and then a teacher of this subject since 1970, speaks in glowing terms of Shazia's work. His assessment was endorsed when the so-called thesis work of Shazia, done for her final examination (entitled "The Scroll"), was acquired by the Pacific Asia Museum for the exhibition of "Contemporary Paintings from Pakistan" held at Pasadena, Calif., in 1994.

Shazia's "The Scroll" is a 60 in. by 14 in. painting in miniature style and technique (gouache on triple pasted paper with prepared ground, rubbed smooth). Abandoning the conventionally posed figures in certain traditional situations, Shazia brought miniture painting right update by taking as subject her own daily life in the setting of her home. This she presents in a continuous strip, not in separate "frames" but in separated areas of one panoramic scene that comprehends many places and many times in one view. This is an old convention of miniature painting in which walls, rocks, trees and other features are used to divide connected scenes enacted over time. Shazia juggles and stretches out the house structure (often implausibly) in two storeys to set her diverse doings. A high view-point has been adopted for the buildings, showing even roofs, but the figures are all at eye-level. This multiple perspective is another old convention of the style. What is far is shown higher up and not smaller and dimmer. Needless to say, the treatment is two-dimensional and the subjects have been flattened out though some converging lines suggest depth. The minute details of a score of scenes dove-tailed into each other, naturally, took six months to execute but the tour de force has been well brought off.



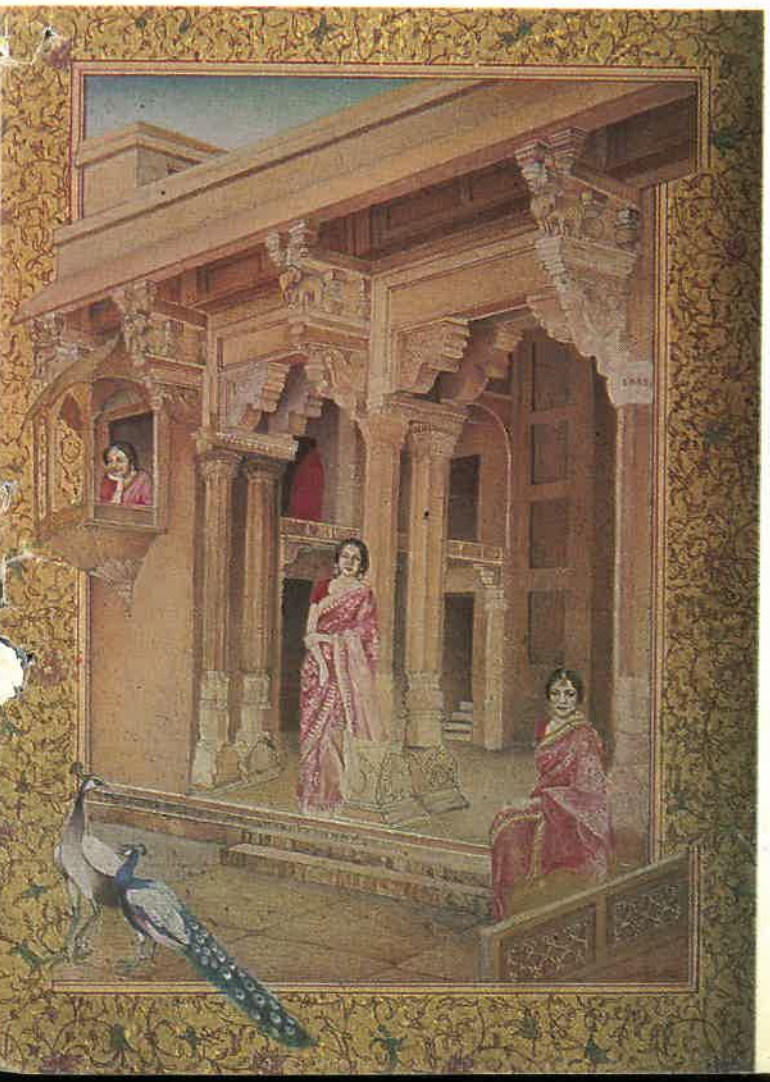
Shazia Sikander

SHAZIA SIKANDER

1969 *Born at Lahore.*
1992 *BFA degree in Miniature Painting from NCA.*
1994-95 *Working for MFA degree in Painting at Rhode Island School of Design, USA. Employed as Instructor at same school for Continuing Education Division and for Winter session '94.*

(On left):
images of herself in the lap of history

(Below): Scenes from The Scroll









Fasihullah Ahsan

Fasihullah Ahsan

Fasihullah Ahsan (b. 1968) is another of the promising young miniature painters who have come out of the National College of Art, Lahore. Encouraged by their teacher, Prof. Bashir Ahmad, to break new ground, many of them attempted large panoramic scenes as part of their final examination "thesis" work, as it is called. On the previous page has been discussed the work of Shazia Sikander, a class fellow of Ahsan. While she took people as her subject for a long horizontal strip, Ahsan undertook an equally large vertical painting showing places, in this case the big sprawling city of Lahore, from the Ravi and Jahangir's Tomb at one end to the airport at the other end. Sometimes the view is from the top, as Badshahi Mosque courtyard, and sometimes from the ground, as the Minars and domes of the mosque. This multiple perspective again is common in olden miniatures. What is noteworthy is the way in which this huge urban conglomeration has been neatly arranged into one long meandering design. The blank ground left on either side is a relief to the eye and a foil for the busy, detailed heavily worked part. It may be mentioned that panoramic views are common in Mughal miniature (Aurangzeb hunting neelgais; Aurangzeb sailing on a boat with a vast scene beyond the bank) but these are no more than 11 x 15 inches. The biggest of all (8 ft. 11 in. x 32 in.) showing Bahadur Shah I, in battle against Maratha chieftains, is now in the Jaipur Museum and parts have been reproduced by Stuart Cary Welch in his book "INDIA : Art and Culture, 1300-1900". Much more similar to Ahsan's painting is another reproduced by Welch in the same book entitled "In the Harem Garden", showing a vast complex of palace buildings stretching far to the horizon, where flows a river. It was painted by Faizullah in Faizabad (Lucknow) in 1765.

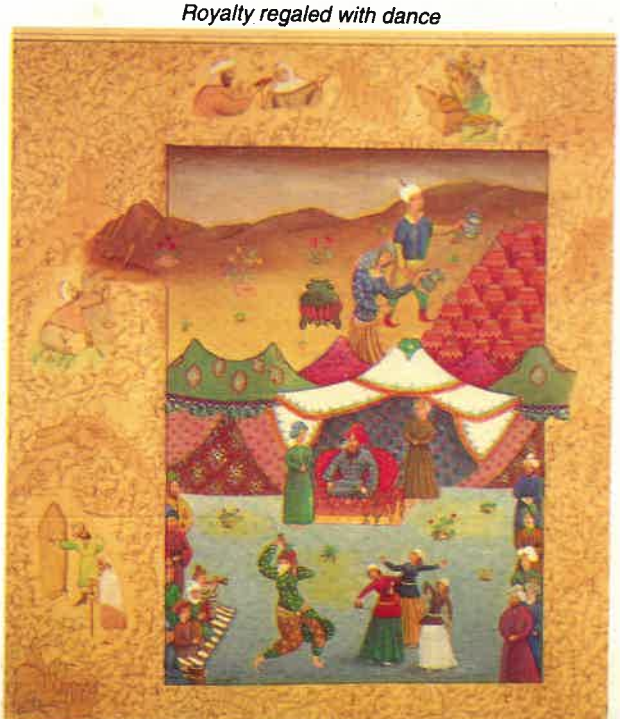
FASIHULLAH AHSAN

1968	*Born*
1988	*B.A. from Government College, Lahore*
1993	*N.D.F.A. from NCA, Lahore.*
1994	*Won Gold Medal in 6th National Exhibition of Visual Arts.*

Lahore City (71x36in.)



Royalty regaled with dance



A. K. Sajjad



A.K.sajjad

A. K. Sajjad (b. 1923) is primarily a sufi or mystic and his art is a medium for the expression of his reflections on life. He does not believe in art for art's sake but only as a means to promote a richer, better and nobler life. This is obvious from the illustrations he has painted for his books: "The Sufi: Hermit of the Rocks", and the book of Urdu quatrains called "Nida-i-Sajjad".

The illustrations in the first book are nude figure compositions and show his excellent command of figure drawing in the Western classical style. He can depict not only each limb realistically but each muscle.

What is more striking than the figure drawing however is the visionary or dream situations in which the figures are placed. They are always shown meditating with closed eyes, bowed down or prostrate or praying with out-stretched hands or kneeling or standing with arms around each other in a close embrace or in various dance poses, as if in an ecstasy. Some figures are even shown sailing in the air, as if levitated in some super-natural experience. The whole atmosphere is soulful, doleful, mystical and moralistic.

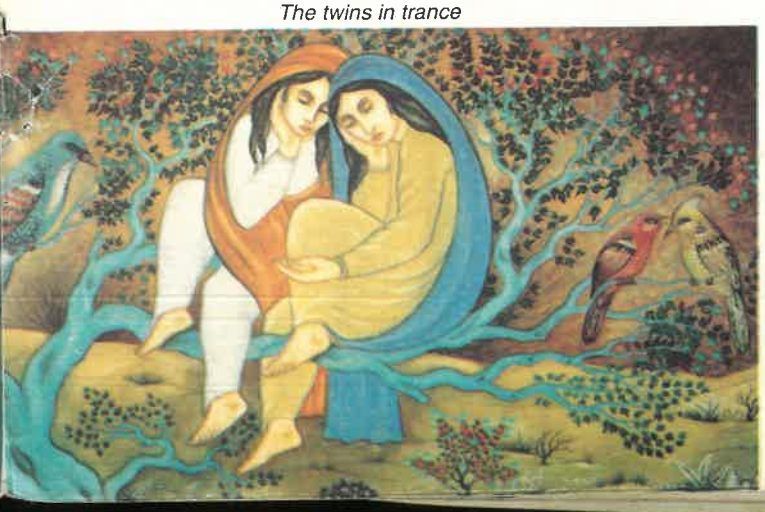
The style of paintings with which he has illustrated his Urdu book is Oriental and nearer our miniature painting. These are mostly in size 42 in. x 32 in., while the pictures of the book "The Sufi" are mostly 26 in. x 20 in. They are both painted in tempera colours on paper. The Urdu book illustrations are more attractively poetical, showing women in loose dresses in garden settings, consorting lovingly with colourful birds or sleek gazelles or reaching out towards the moon or kneeling with out-stretched hands in a worshipful trance, always with closed eyes. The drapery in which the figures are swathed leaves no room for figure drawing and the folds are rendered in rhythmical curves rather than realistically. Again, the whole setting of trees, mountains, birds and animals is visionary and from another world. Often two women are kneeling facing each other and touching heads in deep reverie or symmetrically raising hands in prayer before each other, and sometimes three sitting close with bowl in hand and one hand holding the head in deep thought.

They depict a strange and visionary world but the bright colours and the fanciful imagery of bird, animal and plant life make them attractive.

A.K. SAJJAD

1923	*Born in East Punjab Schooling at Aligarh University. Later studied at J.J. School of Art, Bombay.*
1950	*Job in Pakistani Embassy, Rome.*
1960	*Obtained degree from Academy of Fine Arts, Rome.*
1961-65	*Worked in Pakistani Embassy, Paris.*
1967-87	*Worked in UNESCO, Paris.*
1987	*Returned and settled in Islamabad.*

The twins in trance



Fruitful life





Laila Shahzada

Historical Painters

Laila Shahzada

Laila Shahzada held her first solo exhibition in 1960 at the Arts Council of Karachi. The paintings were romantically realistic and showed such subjects as a gaudily dressed peasant girl holding a sickle in her hand.

In her quest for a style novel and "modern", she hit upon the subject of drift wood. This she painted in many writhing and tortuous forms that were suggestive of frenzied human figures.

This bizarre series she continued to paint for long until her attention was drawn to the ruins and relics of the Indus Valley Civilization which flourished in Pakistan five thousand years ago. Worldwide interest was aroused in this ancient civilization when UNESCO sent a team of leading archaeologists to assess the dangers of extinction faced by the ruins because of the rising level of subsoil water. Laila produced a series of paintings in which she brought to life various aspects of that long lost civilization by using its surviving ruins and statues and other artefacts. An exhibition of these paintings, entitled "The Indus Valley Civilization" was held at Karachi in 1976.

Some of the paintings were based on the famous Dancing Girl of Moenjodaro to whom she gave flesh and blood in her reconstructions. In one case, she was shown sitting with folded knees. The neck and torso and arms were thinned and elongated and rhythmically curved while the head was reduced and the whole placed in a dance-like posture .

In another painting the same lean figure was shown lying on the back of a huge bull whose image had been taken from the famous pictorial seals of Moenjodaro. The artist imagines the dancing girl to be performing acrobatic tricks on the back of a charging bull, as they are shown doing on the vases of ancient Crete.

A more fleshy and robust version of the same Dancing Girl, again with bangles all over her left arm, and a small head, is shown holding a large vase like those found at Moenjodaro. The strong contrasts produced by the deep light and shade, and the hair blowing in the wind, make the picture very dramatic.

Apart from these single figures of the denizens of Moenjodaro, Laila has painted a large scene from those bygone times entitled "Towards the Light". Two extremely svelte nude females are walking up the steps of a temple towards a blazing light. The big stones of the dark and mysterious temple are dramatically lighted up by the fire. And so is the front of the two girls. They have the same athletic bodies with long thin curved backs and

Moenjodaro Dancing Girl as acrobat in Cretan style



small derrieres as the bronze Dancing Girl, and likewise their left arms are covered with bangles from end to end. The hairdo also is peculiar to Moenjodaro.

The picture is painted all in light and dark orange, with touches of blue, while the highlights are in cadmium yellow. The foreground is in Indian red. It is a very convincing reconstruction of a scene from Moenjodaro based on authentic relics of that civilization. The figure drawing is good and the control of the colour and the light is excellent.

Coming much nearer in time, Laila has also painted historical pictures of the Buddha based on the relics of Gandhara art which flourished in Pakistan in the first eight centuries of this era.

One large horizontal canvas is crowded with a number of heads of the Buddha, such as we find in abundance in our museums in the Gandhara sections. These are dimly seen, floating through a mist that is sailing across their faces. Some heads are far and some near and each shows a stage of the Buddha in his quest for enlightenment. Then, on the right is a large bust of the Buddha after having attained Nirvana. Studded or rather painted in the picture here and there are jewels of different colours, symbolizing the jewel of wisdom which he attained. It is a crowded composition well brought off.

Laila has painted some sixty or seventy historical paintings and that is a very substantial contribution to this genre. All this work was done mostly in the 70s. In the 80s, she started painting highly stylized human figures shown as if they were sculpture panels in high relief. The human figure is in silhouette and the edges are smoothly curved. Often hollows are made in the figure and sometimes a round hole. In some cases, the head and the feet are lopped off and only the torso is shown. This work represents her departure from realism and the attempt to create something different and new. Its only merit is its novelty.



Buddha in meditation

Moenjodaro girl climbing towards altar fire



LAILA SHAHZADA

1926	Born at Little Hampton, England.
1945-46	Studied with Royal Drawing Society, London.
1958-60	Took lessons from A.S. Nagi
1960	First solo exhibition (at Karachi).
1990	Most recent exhibition, Barbican Galleries, London.
1994 (July)	Died at Islamabad.



Jimmy Engineer meeting Sister Theresa

Jimmy Engineer

Jimmy Engineer (b. Quetta, 1954) was only twenty when he undertook the project of making a series of large paintings of the greatest migration in recent history, which took place between India and Pakistan in 1947 and after.

He had received some education at the National College of Art, Lahore, but never completed the course. Depending wholly on his own resources of artistic talent, he painted seven large murals on this subject of the great migration between 1974 and 1982. The biggest of these is 13 feet x 4 1/2 feet. The others are somewhat smaller.

All the paintings show the huge masses of the refugees moving through the wilderness on their way to Pakistan. In one case they are resting under a gigantic banyan tree. In another they are being attacked by the Sikhs with swords and daggers and clubs. Only in one they are shown to have arrived in a Pakistani village but there is only a small family group of six figures in this picture unlike the others which show huge crowds.

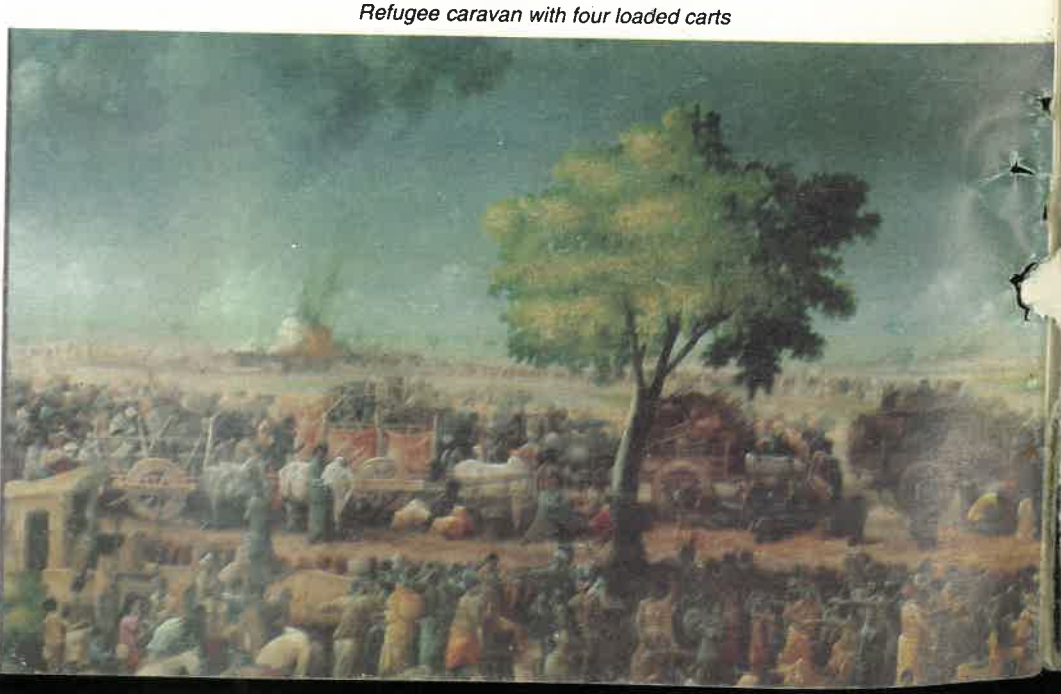
The composition of all these big murals is roughly the same. They are not close-up studies of groups of figures but broad panoramic views in which the figures are seen from a distance and set in a landscape, complete with horizon and a broad band of sky and big trees.

Closer to the viewer, at the lower edge of the mural, is a frieze of densely crowded figures. Above and behind that is a narrower band, with some landscape features in between. In the third and uppermost band, there is a dimly visible narrow row of figures on the horizon, where he sometimes shows fire and smoke. A big tree is often included in the scene and this is so outsize that it stretches from the top to bottom, dwarfing the figures beneath it. Above the dim horizon is the wide expanse of the sky.

The young artist deserves fullest credit for the ingenuity and variety and realism with which he has depicted the immense caravans of poor peasants and villagers on the move through the wilderness. Scores of men, women, children, young and old, are shown in different postures and positions, sitting, standing, stooping, lying, carrying, pulling, gesturing and so forth.

The many details of the humble possessions of the poor people, their boxes and bundles, beds and benches, earthen and metal pots and pans, carried on their heads or on bullock carts, add to the naturalism of the picture.

Refugee caravan with four loaded carts



JIMMY ENGINEER

1954	*Born at Loralai (Balochistan). Studied briefly at National College of Art, Lahore.*
1980	*3rd Prize in Painting at National Art Exhibition*
1974-82	*Painted seven murals on the subject of the Partition riots.*
1994	*Walked Karachi to Khyber collecting funds for Islamic Medical Foundation.*

To compose this densely packed milling crowd of humanity into a coherent and articulate picture required much skill of which the artist has given adequate proof. The whole scene is bathed in a tonal harmony, which is not the case in Turab's paintings of the same subject (p. 257). However, since all the figures are seen from a distance, there is no clear and forceful figure study or characterization which we find in Turab. Naturally, the forms and figures, their shades and colours, their dress and drapery all become much simplified when far away and just token indications of each are enough. This is specially evident in the treatment of faces.

Though almost every figure is doing something, in most cases the gestures are stiff and fail to indicate movement. This becomes very obvious in the mural in which turbaned Sikhs armed with swords are shown attacking the Muslims. In this scene of violent fighting, the artist has failed to show action. The movement of the arm and body in inflicting a blow is not at all convincingly rendered.Only a number of figures with out-stretched arms are supposed to suggest fighting but the bodies are motionless. Although all these murals show the great migration but surprisingly, nowhere is the caravan on the move. All are at rest.

Another feature of these big murals that is disturbing is the perspective. The artist shows a broad band of figures right on the lower edge of the painting and behind that another narrower band while behind and beyond that is a third still narrower band, on the horizon. This distant view is possible only from some high point but then the figures should be shown as such whereas they are all shown frontally at eye level. In fact even the size of the figures is not reduced in the second row, in many of the paintings. In one painting which has four bullock carts in the middle row, a huge tree rises from the bottom row to the top of the sky but even its highest point seems to be at eye level whereas its foliage high above should appear to be seen from below.

Apart from perspective, trees are generally rather poorly painted, except in one case in which a small group of refugees is shown as having arrived in Pakistan. In one excellent painting showing a huge crowd of refugees resting under a colossal banyan tree, the tree has been so poorly painted that it has almost ruined the painting. It is nothing but a huge stain of greenish brown colour which has nothing tree-like except the jagged edges and some hanging roots. The enormous patch of colour which almost fills the whole sky above the crowd of men and women has not the slightest likeness to the foliage of a tree. It is just one huge blot of greenish brown colour through which light filters here and there.

All the murals are roughly the same, except the one in which the Sikhs are shown attacking and killing the refugees and some people are locked in struggle. In this he has tried to show some action although the movements of the arms and the bodies are not always quite natural and convincing. Still, he deserves credit for showing such a huge scene of human turmoil. By making the broad lower band of the figures dark, he



An illustration of Iqbal's book-length poem "Javed Namah".

Refugees from India coming to Pakistan





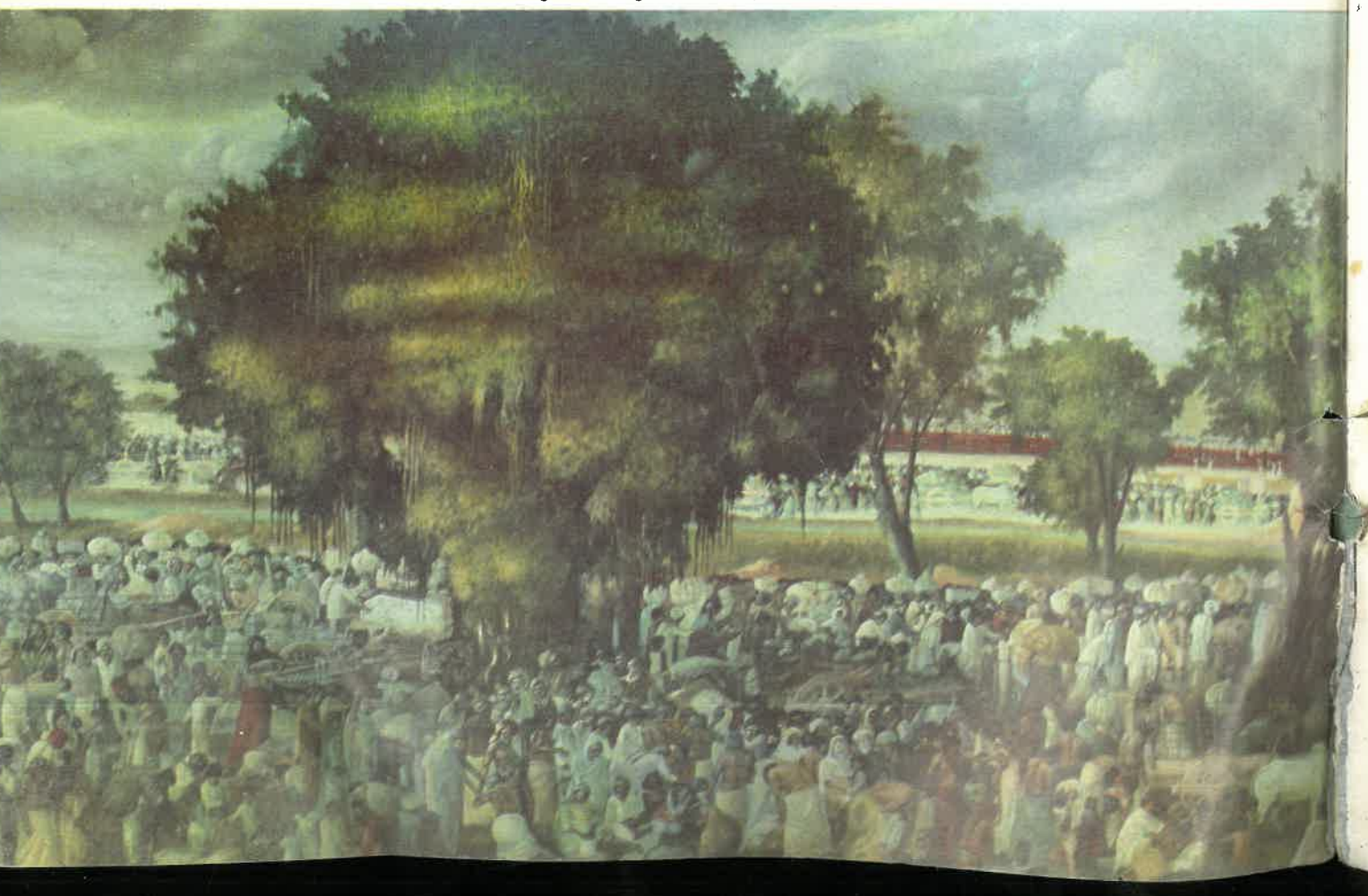
The artist standing with his calligraphic creation

emphasises the dramatic and tragic nature of the events depicted. The second and third band or row of figures above this main lower scene is in excellent perspective, with the figures getting smaller and dimmer until they fade on the horizon, at least in this painting.

Another highly dramatic painting is the one in which a village is burning in the background but the flag of Pakistan is defiantly flying on the thatched roof of a house on the left. There are only a few figures in the lowest row but they are painted dark against the red glow of the fire. The figures in the second row are much smaller and their gestures show their panic as they flee their burning homes. The third row is of just tiny figures walking upright in single file with equal spacing, right under the walls of the burning village, which strikes one as a little unnatural. But otherwise the painting is well composed and well executed.

Although the murals are all admirable, perhaps the best is the one which has four bullock carts in the second row, piled high with luggage, with many figures around them. sitting, standing and hurrying. The figures at the upper far edge of this second row have been very naturally dimmed because of the distance and those beyond in the third row, on the horizon, are appropriately tiny and hazy. In the lowest row are scores of men, women and children engaged in a variety of activities or simply sitting or lying, too exhausted to do anything. Only the big tree right in the middle seems a little odd because it is not in the same perspective and proportion as the figures.

Refugees resting under a banyan tree



M. Turab



M. Turab

M. Turab (1907-77). The horrible bloody riots that took place on a colossal scale at the time of the partition of India and the multitudinous exchange of population, became the subject of many novels, short stories and poems but hardly any painter turned his attention to them.

M. Turab dared to paint this extremely difficult and painful subject in 1970 on a huge canvas, 72 x 44 inches. He has very skillfully composed scores of figures in the picture and has been able to suggest thousands in the background. The figures in the foreground, the middle ground and the background have been progressively diminished in size in correct perspective. The figure drawing of the many almost nude and the seminude male and female figures is quite good. The nearby figures have been well modelled so as to bring out the third dimension. A distraught abandoned child is shown crying in the foreground. The grief, terror, dismay, of the victims and the flaming rage of the killers has been depicted on some of the near faces. Many figures are shown in action, stabbing, attacking, dragging, struggling and gesturing. The murderous assaults and the savage brutality has been actually made visible with painful realism. Fire and smoke fill the distant horizon and a railway train is shown being attacked by a crowd, which was a common occurrence in those days. The clothes have been appropriately shown torn and tattered but the folds have not been realistically depicted. The colours of the bare bodies and also of the clothes are too bright and there is no overall tonal harmony so that each figure is like a paper cutout. Still what he has achieved in rendering this difficult subject is admirable.

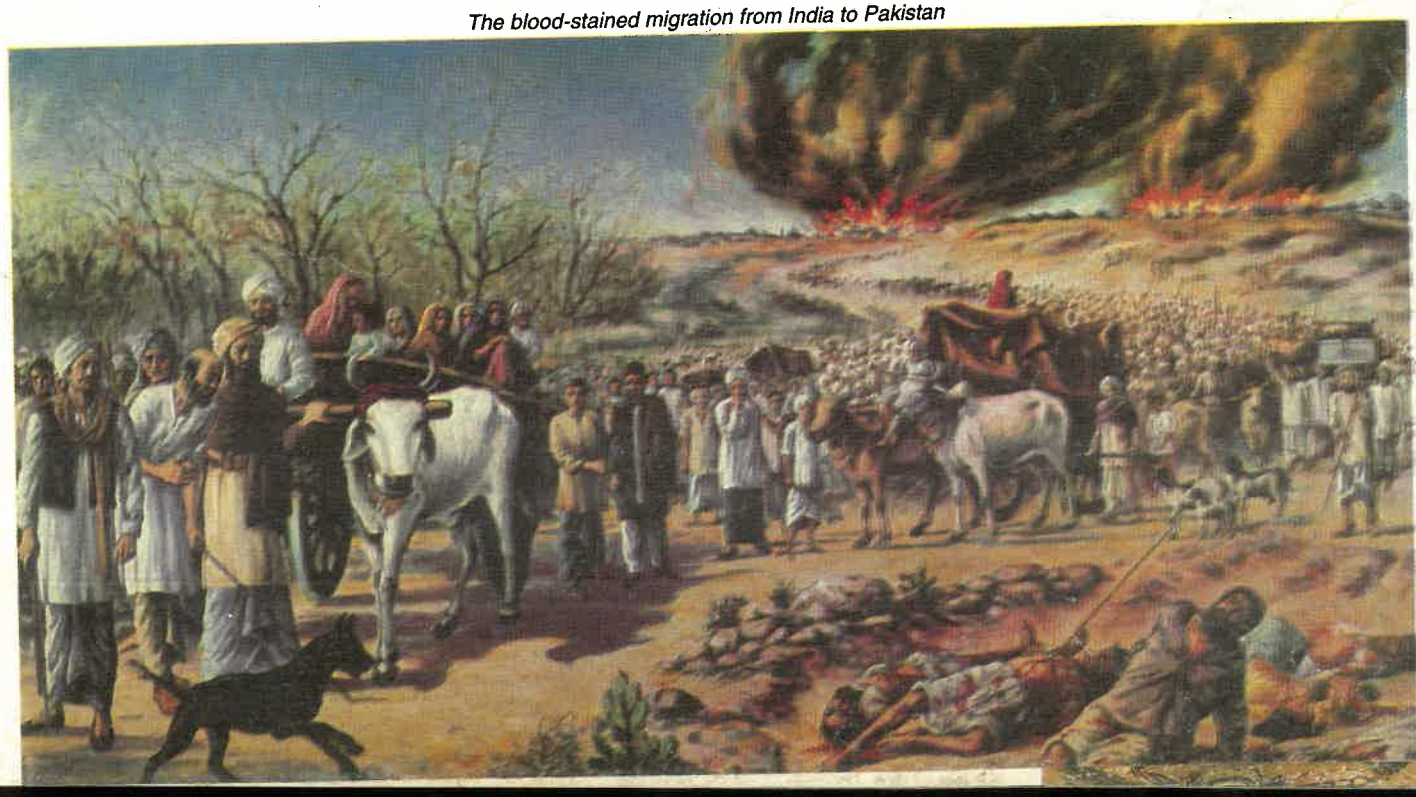
In another canvas, 60 x 36 inches, he has shown a huge caravan of refugees wending their way slowly on foot and on bullock carts to Pakistan. By the wayside are lying murdered and wounded men while in the background fire and huge clouds of smoke fill the horizon. The picture has been excellently composed.

No doubt, all of Turab's work is very realistic, rather decorative and too multichrome and bright coloured but his figure drawing, modelling, distribution of light and shade and above all his composition is excellent. Apart from their aesthetic appeal his paintings provide artistic documentation of important events which are a part of our history.

M. TURAB

1907	*Born in Hyderabad Deccan. Learned painting for one year from Ustad Mohammed Abdul Qayyum, famous for painting stage sets.*
1924	*Moved to Bombay*
1926	*Employed by Koh-e-Noor Films to paint sets.*
1935	*Set up own studio.*
1947	*Migrated to Pakistan.*
1973	*Solo exhibition in Karachi.*
1977	*Died in Karachi*

The blood-stained migration from India to Pakistan



Socially Conscious Painters

European art has great traditions of social awareness. As far back as the 16th century, the great German masters Durer and Holbeir. castigated the vices and villainies of people in their series of woodcut prints called, respectively, "Christ and Anti-Christ" and "Dance of Death". Then in the 17th century, the French genius Jaques Callot created a series of masterly etchings called "The Miseries of War". In the 18th century arose the greatest name in protest art, the Spaniard Goya who created a terrifying series of 82 etchings called "The Disasters of War", the most moving condemnation of war in the history of art. In the 19th century, lived the greatest social satirist, the Frenchman, Honore Daumier, who, with scathing wit and biting irony, shot his barbs at the social and moral evils that he found in the Parisian society of his day, through his masterly lithographs, which number about four thousand. In the 20th century, many artists who went through the trauma of World War I expressed their horror and disgust in paintings and drawings. Among them were Kokoschka, Otto Dix, Beckmann and Grosz but none distilled more powerfully the essence of the tragedy of war than the German woman artist Kathe Kollwitz. The cycle of dark and sombre woodcuts she produced in 1925 entitled "War" were simple, powerful, wholly Expressionist projections of the profound sorrow she felt at the ordeal suffered by the people. Picasso's great painting "Guernica" is a moving memorial of the cruel destruction of the Spanish town of that name by the German bombers in 1937. His 18-panel painting "The Lie of Franco" is a scathing condemnation of a dictator.

In the evolution of Pakistani art, we find the early years dominated by Chughtai and Allahbux. Both painted a highly idealized picture of life, full of sweetness and light, with no tragedies and no ugliness. The style of Allahbux was more realistic and he came closer to life when he painted the life of farmers, ploughing with their team of bullocks or threshing corn or when he painted the village folk of the Punjab in festive moods, at weddings or fairs.

Then in the 50s came the period of modern abstract and semi-abstract art of which the leader was Shakir Ali. These artists looked down on thematic painting and strove in their paintings to create an abstract beauty of balance and proportion, rhythm and unity, colour tones and textures. Even if they used human and animal figures or inanimate objects, they abstracted them or reduced them to their basic structure and design. During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, when someone asked Shakir Ali why he was painting birds and flowers and the moon, living in Lahore, when bombs were falling all around, and the thunder of artillery filled the air, he replied that flowers were blooming and the moon was shining on both sides of the battle line and these were the eternal verities that he painted.

Martyr keeps flag flying and torch burning —*Sadequain*



Sadequain

Then in the middle 50s emerged Sadequain, a very socially conscious artist who felt acutely the ills and evils, the tragedies and sufferings of life. After living for some time in a wild spot on the shores of Karachi called Gadani, where the cactus grows wild in the harsh desert conditions, he adopted this thorny plant as a symbol of man struggling and surviving in the most adverse conditions.

He was attracted to tragic subjects and in 1961 he entered in the Biennale of Paris a painting entitled "The Last Supper". In this a row of human figures was suggestively built up in abstract form through the use of crescent shapes or curved blades or exaggerated cactus thorns.

Early in 1965, he expressed his deep sorrow at the decadence and degeneration of life in his country by making a series of drawings and paintings in which men and women were shown on whose heads crows were making nests and laying eggs. In early 1966, he put up an exhibition of drawings in which he showed cobwebs growing all around the men and women and even on themselves, suggesting decay, decline and degeneration. In the middle of 1966, he made still more drawings in which besides the crows and cobwebs, he showed rats and lizards and cockroaches crawling on men and women and even snakes entwining them but the people were in a stupor and utterly brutalized.

The 1965 war with India led Sadequain to make a more uplifting and inspiring painting, which was actually a mural 40 X 8 feet. In this he showed the forces of darkness clashing with the forces of light. On one side were monsters, skeletons, carrion crows and demons, while on the other side were a healthy couple, a young mother with a child, a farmer with his plough raised up as a weapon, and finally, an enormous pregnant woman. The forces of goodness are on the offensive while the others are passive. Thus, he gave an allegorical and universal version of war rather than a particular conflict between two nations.

In 1967 he painted at Mangla his enormous mural 180 X 23 feet, entitled "The Saga of Labour" in which he showed the progress of man from the manual labourer who uses only his muscle power breaking stones to the master of science and technology who soars into outer space by the use of his brain power.

In September, 1966, on the anniversary of the 1965 war, he again painted two huge canvases, one of which was entitled "The Hostile Principle" against which the war was waged and should continue to be waged, according to the universal meaning given by the artist to the Enemy; and the second was "Victory", for which he used his favourite symbol of the martyr or Shaheed to represent the great heroes of the nation who gave their lives so that the others should live and so that Truth should flourish.

The last great project of his life, which he began painting in 1986, was the mural which is now installed on the ceiling of the Liaquat Hall (old Frere Hall) In Karachi. It has been painted on 87 hardboard panels of 8 X 4 feet, while thirteen remain unpainted because of his death in February, 1987. It is entitled "The Universe of Earth and Heaven". It includes two huge figurative murals, painted on the northern side of the hall. One represents Darkness and Light, while the other represents War and Peace, in allegorical form and symbolic images.

Thus, it is obvious that Sadequain felt deeply the sufferings and trials of man and strove constantly to use his art for promoting the cause of goodness and righteousness, progress and enlightenment, peace and happiness.



"Likh-te rahay junoon ki hikayaat-e-khoon -chikaan Harchand is main haath hamaray qalam hu-ey."

Ghalib

Doubly locked and triply chained painter



Mansur Rahi

The other leading artist of Pakistan who is noteworthy for his deep social awareness is Mansur Rahi. He emerged on the artistic scene of Pakistan in the mid-60s and right from the beginning his painting was thematic and thoughtful. Although his painting became purely abstract, roughly from 1972 to 1982, even in this period he gave powerful expression to the feelings aroused in him by the moving events of national life, especially the tragedies and disasters, mostly through realistic drawings. Rahi was never indifferent to the events taking place around him. Gifted with a sensitive heart and an expressive brush, he responded creatively to the suffering inflicted by natural disasters or by the cruelty of man to man.

Such was the case with the cataclysmic cyclone which hit East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1970. Rahi went there to see for himself the extent of the tragedy and the scarred, bruised and battered face of the country. These impressions were seared into his consciousness and emerged from his brush in the form of 27 black and white drawings that had all the finesse of Ingres and the force of Daumier. With his characteristic whip-lash strokes for the long lines and jabs and dabs for the short lines, he distilled the essence of the tragedy in the form of grieving or stunned faces and shattered homesteads and sprawling rotting corpses. It was a macabre vision of a supreme tragedy masterfully rendered with the brush and Indian ink. The whole series was shown on T.V. in a special programme called "Dastaan Eik Toofaan Ki".

In 1971, East Pakistan went up in flames, when the secessionist movement, abetted by India, erupted into a full-scale war seeking separation from Pakistan. Orgies of brutality were perpetrated by the people who went on rampage to avenge injustices they felt to have been done to them by the non-Bengali administrators and settlers. The excesses of the military seeking to suppress the spreading disorder and mob hysteria, added fuel to the fire. Rahi made a series of drawings that focused on the heroic role of the Pakistan Army in fighting the invading Indian army that poured in from all sides. Rahi's figure drawing is excellent. He showed scenes of parachute raids, tank fights, air raids, hand to hand fights, peasants against the Indian soldiers, collapsing buildings, destruction of hospitals, violation of women and other brutalities. There was much symbolism in the form of flags and raised fists and trampling boots and, finally, a baby crawling over the rubble and smiling a symbolic smile over the debris of war.

Later, Rahi drew sketches depicting the tragedy of the 80,000 Pakistani soldiers who were trapped in East Pakistan when the resistance collapsed. He sensitively and feelingly picturised the plight of the POWs and the mental torture suffered by their families.

Again in 1973, when disastrous floods devastated large areas of West Pakistan lying along the mighty rivers, Rahi came forward to show nature in a tyrannical mood and

The Thinker



man its helpless plaything. These thirty drawings were again shown on TV and drew well-deserved admiration.

In 1974, an historic Islamic Summit of the Heads of State of all Muslim nations was arranged by the Pakistan government in Lahore. Rahi made a magnificent mural of 10 X 6 feet to commemorate the occasion in which he depicted all the Heads of State participating in the Summit.

Rahi's sympathies are not limited to Pakistan. In 1980, when a disastrous drought hit the Sahel countries of Africa (the belt along the southern fringes of the Sahara), Rahi made a series of 30 Expressionist drawings in black and white. These naturally recall the masterly realistic drawings of the Bengal Famine of 1942-43 made by the famous Bengali artist Zainul Abedin, who was one of the teachers of Rahi in Dacca. Both are done with brush and Indian ink. Both have a high degree of technical skill. Each is appropriate to its times. Rahi's drawings are done in a modern idiom.



Refugees

It is not only in his drawings that Rahi gives proof of social awareness and a feeling heart. From 1982 onward, he began to introduce social themes into his paintings but in a subtle way. The human and animal images were highly abstracted and stylized. Thus he has painted the Afghan refugees, war, hunger, the wild cat series, the wild horse series, which are both symbolic of war, and much else. It goes to his credit that in spite of burdening his paintings with meanings and subjects, he is able to maintain the painterly character and the flawless design quality of his compositions.

Anna Molka Ahmed

Anna Molka Ahmed was such a versatile artist that during the half century of her active life she painted every genre and naturally she did not ignore the life around her and the problems faced by the people.

Starting from the beginning, there was the great migration from India and especially from East Punjab into Pakistan, with tremendous suffering and bloodshed. Mrs. Ahmed, living in Lahore, was an eyewitness of this moving spectacle and she recorded her impressions in a huge painting of 10 X 5 feet. In this very difficult composition she has shown a flood of humanity heaving towards the Promised Land of Pakistan, which is visible in the distance, symbolically, as an illuminated building.

Mourning the dead





The horrors of war

Before the building of the many dams and barrages on the rivers of Pakistan, there used to be many floods which inflicted widespread suffering on the people. Mrs. Ahmed painted a 5 X 3 foot canvas on this subject which depicted a vast scene, with the waters raging in the background and overwhelming the villages; a boat in the middle ground, in which people are struggling to escape the flood; and in the foreground a rescued dead or half dead old man lying on a charpai (string-woven cot) around whom are standing and sitting downcast mournful men, a woman and a child.

The 1947-48 war in which the people of Kashmir tried to overthrow the Indian yoke with the help of Pakistan, aroused unparalleled enthusiasm. Mrs. Ahmed painted a very impressive full figure picture of a Kashmiri "Mujahid" or crusader, vowing, with raised hands to embark on his mission, while his old father sits on one side and his wife and small child on the other, with many other dim figures in the background.

In September,1965, India treacherously invaded Pakistan, and was poised to take Lahore. However, as soon as their first tank had crossed the bridge over the BRB Canal, the Pakistani commander blew up the bridge and stopped further advance while the one tank was destroyed. Mrs. Ahmed painted two canvases of this historic action, one 6 X 4 feet and one 10 X 4 feet. The first hangs in the regimental mess of the commander and the second in the GHQ.

She also painted social problems like the plight of old retired people, such as herself. These she depicted in a painting called "Living Rubbish".

But her most ambitious painting on a social theme is her "Dance of Death", 24 X 8 feet, painted in the tradition of the great European artists who satirized and exposed the evil doings of society at which Death, in the form of skeletons, was laughing in the background. Mrs. Ahmed also has shown a sweeping panorama of human history from the days of savagery through the earliest civilizations, the coming of the great religions and the exploitation in their name, the tyrannies of dictators and generals, the cruelties of the landlords, plutocrats and warlords, the coming of the nuclear holocaust to end the frivolities of man and finally his relapse again into the stone age and the state of savagery. In the background there is a long row of ghoulish skeletons dancing and laughing at the vanities of man.

Rabia Zuberi



Rabia Zuberi

Rabia Zuberi is a leading sculptor of Pakistan and she has been active since the early 60s when there were few others in the field. She is a socially conscious artist who is acutely aware of the happenings around her, especially the tragedies.

From 1965 to 1968, her sculpture was very thematic and she was trying to embody feelings such as hope, and ideas such as justice, and situations such as surrender to a lover or protestations by a lover. These were single and sometimes double figures.

From 1970 to 1975 she was trying to capture simply the beauty of the human form but in the abstract style of modern sculpture. The figures were often headless or with only small stumps for the head, much elongated.

From 1976 to 1982 again a slight suggestion of a theme entered her work. She was involved in the construction of the building of her art school and had the opportunity to see closely groups of men engaged in manual labour. She was impressed by the power and beauty of the human frame under stress and strain. The many groupings of figures also suggested complex compositions. All this she tried to capture in her sculpture in an abstract way, and also in some pencil sketches in a realistic way. Though her preoccupation was with form, her sympathy with the toiling masses also came through. The power and grandeur of the single figure and the groups of crowded figures emerges in her sculpture and her drawings.

From 1983 to 1985 the design element received emphasis in her sculpture. The forms were moulded into patterns by the use of flowing rhythm or repetition or even the use of floral or geometrical motifs.

From 1986 to 1987 she was modelling female figures wrapped in the dupatta (large scarf or mantle) whose use received increased emphasis those days, as a sign of modesty. Highly abstract single figures were made by her, enveloped in drapery.

From 1988 to 1990 violent disorders greatly increased in her hometown of Karachi and she was deeply moved by the suffering of the people. The result was the Peace Series of drawings, paintings and sculpture.

The wounded bird of peace



This was done much more powerfully in her favourite medium of sculpture, than in the graphic media. She modelled one head or two joined heads with distraught and tortured looks or face upraised in despair or overcast with gloom. Some faces were highly distorted and even disfigured to emphasize the tragedy but most were naturalistic, depicting despair and deep suffering. Exaggeration of the dipping and rising surfaces of the face and the head gave the sculpture a rugged look, and also heightened the emotional impact.

None of this is found in the drawings and paintings that she began to do increasingly in this period and that she exhibited in her first solo show of these graphic works (together with her sculpture) in 1990.

The cherished dove





Salima Hashmi

In the drawings, which are done with a fine pen, she does not show faces in close view but only figures in groups at some distance. So there is none of this powerful projection of emotion through the face. It is through gestures and symbols that she puts across her ideas in the drawings. Hands crossed at the breast signify deep sorrow. Hands thrown up in despair or raised high to demand peace are other devices to convey her idea. The dove of peace is often used as a symbol and so is the palm of the hand and fish and flowers.

In most of the drawings and in some of the paintings, one, two, three or even four rows of figures are shown standing at various heights on a flat vertical surface that looks like a cliff with horizontal ledges. There are also vertical streaks or edges or crevices, which together make a number of roughly outlined compartments or panels.

There is nothing at all sculpturesque in the drawing, as one might expect from the hands of a sculptor.

She uses thick-grained handmade paper and often exploits the rough texture by applying the colour lightly so as to create a mottled effect. Quite often, colour is applied on colour, one showing through the other, both being grainy and sparse.

These and other painterly effects figure prominently in her work. The faces and figures fill only a small part of the picture space and in the rest Rabia plays freely with the colour, creating lights and shadows and colour variations, within a limited colour range in each case. All this has its own abstract beauty, quite apart from the imagery and the professed subject. The theme of Peace comes through strongly only in rare cases. Mostly it is the painterly qualities of the picture that attract the viewer.

Salima Hashmi

Although Salima Hashmi studied briefly at the National College of Art, Lahore, 1960-62 and at the Bath Academy of Art, U.K., it was only in 1983 that she held a solo exhibition of her paintings, first at Rawalpindi and then at Karachi.

Even her 1983 paintings were hesitant sallies in which the high tragedy of social tyranny and oppression of women was projected sketchily and patchily with little signs and symbols. Perhaps being the daughter of poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz she could not help carrying on the crusade against social injustices and being a woman, she raised her voice especially against female suffering. The titles of some of the paintings are significant: "Years of Silence"; "Years of Drought" and a whole series named "Through a Prison Window" and also one recalling the Sabra massacre, "Sabra Dawn".



Though it is an art of protest, there is more sorrow in it than anger. Nor is the expression and execution of these feelings furious or impetuous. Rather, she expresses herself in delicate little cameos and dainty sketches done very lightly and furtively in pastel, water colour and pen and ink, together, with some pasted newspaper clippings. There is no drawing or painting of a continuous scene but only these little glimpses of female faces or nude figures and prison windows and prison bars and small plants or bunches of leaves, as symbols of hope and revival. All these are added up into composite pictures, leaving some of the paper blank.

The most prominent feature in these 1983 paintings are the small plants and bunches of leaves over which the artist seems to lavish much attention. That's about all there is in the painting in many cases. In fact the meticulously drawn and painted delicate leaves seem to symbolize the character of the paintings and the painter rather than the vaguely suggested and dimly shown scenes of horror which form the ostensible subject of the paintings.

At that stage at least, she either did not or could not depict scenes with figures. That is why the painting always depicts the morning after the massacre, the sunrise after the tragedy, the tender leaves that sprout out of the scenes of horror in the next spring, and so on. At best she can show glimpses of nude figures, but without hands, feet or face. Similarly, she is ill at ease with trees and landscape and is content to show twigs and

leaves. When desiring to show the full figure or full trees and landscape she resorts to a shorthand of bare signs and symbols which make do for the real thing.

In this series, also she leaned heavily on newspaper clippings to express herself. For example, in her painting "The Wall" there is a clipping showing a policeman beating a woman. Other clippings of screaming headlines in Urdu or English and pictures of people are vaguely relevant or puzzlingly irrelevant and mystifying thus adding to the eerie atmosphere aimed at by the artist.

In 1989 she went to the USA for higher education in art at the Rhode Island School of Design. The work she did there was exhibited in solo shows at Lahore and Karachi, when she returned in 1990.

There is continuity with the previous work both in theme and form. Protest against oppression is not expressed here as explicitly as before but two hands are shown and sometimes repeated in different parts of the picture to signify raising of hands in despair or helplessness or in pleading for help or begging for an end to persecution.

Harking back to the poetry of defiance and protest written by her father, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, in jail, and published as a book entitled "Dast-e-tahe-Sang" (The hand caught under a rock), Salima also gave this same title to thirteen of her paintings done in acrylic on canvas. In all of these, hands are shown once or twice. There is also invariably a window in the centre or in one corner with a hand in it, obviously suggesting hands groping through a prison window.

The most impressive group of paintings or rather coloured drawings are done on fairly large paper with charcoal. A light purple or blue ground is provided like a soft glow in the background. In most of these ten pictures two vertical and two horizontal bands or bars (white on the black ground) divide the picture into nine squares, again suggesting prison bars. Or there is a square or rectangle in the centre, which has a small landscape within a landscape. This according to the artist, is the inner landscape within the outer. In other words, within the observed scene is the remembered scene.

So much for the subject., The form of the paintings also is a continuation of her previous work and a definite advance. The work remains largely colourless and grey. However, in her charcoal drawings she has at last come up with a distinctive imagery, whereas her previous work was no more than a pastiche of casual sketches and pasted newspaper clippings.

In her next exhibition in 1994, instead of the symbolism of the hand, she has adopted a baleful symbol of the dark cloud tinged with red and called "The Red Monsoon" or "Passion Clouds" and so on. Done within three months, during the monsoon season (of rains) it has obvious tragic overtones. Someone commented on them that. "In some, there is a deep-rooted sense of loneliness, waiting and longing."Perhaps he was thinking of the "Baramasi" paintings of the Pahari and Rajput School in which the lady love is waiting for her lover as the rain clouds gather and cool breezes waft. Nothing could be farther from the ominous and deserted scenes of this series. It is just a facile way of hinting at and suggesting an aura of tragedy by covering the picture area with dark clouds tinged with red, or showing red rather than silver linings, and all that this would imply. The artist has just tried to say much with minimum means.



The Red Monsoon

Dast-e-tah-e-Sang Series





JAMAL SHAH



Jamal Shah

The tragedies and iniquities of life find reflection in the work of most artists of Balochistan, which is not true of the generality. This may be because it is the poorest of the four provinces and often in political turmoil, but the special sensitiveness of the Balochistan artists to the dark side of life deserves recognition.

Jamal Shah is a gifted artist who has also had the benefit of the best art education, at the N.C.A. in Lahore and at the Slade in London. He is also a versatile person, who made a mark as an actor, again in a film about the grave social problem of drugs.

Although he was already well-known in Balochistan, as the Head of the Fine Arts Department of the Balochistan University, in Karachi and Lahore he was noticed with admiration when he brought a clutch of etchings and other graphic work by himself and by his colleagues at the Slade for display here, while he was a student from 1984 to 1986. Already evident was his preoccupation with human suffering.

His talent and specially his power to depict human suffering and social turmoil came into full view when he entered some graphic prints and large oil paintings in the First Art

Tragic trio



Felled by Fate



Biennale of Pakistan '87 (actually held in January 1988 when he was still a student at the Slade). These two oil paintings of size 3 x 5 feet, made a very strong impression on the viewers because there was nothing else of this type and this standard in the exhibition by the Pakistan artists, although tragic themes found a prominent place in the work of Indian artists displayed there.

As can be seen from these small reproductions, Jamal Shah has excellent command of figure drawing and knows how to use colour to dramatise the effect with strong contrasts of light, using only a few colours.

These are highly wrought compositions and fully finished but he also works in another style which he displayed in a group show in Karachi. These were sketches made with a pencil or pastels with swift strokes and a light hand. The treatment was sketchy but he conveyed his message of raining miseries and deadly shafts of ill-fate, depicted as rain and lightning whose stricken victims are floored on the dust. The sparse drawing, the few dabs and strokes of red, the effective symbolism, depicted little and signified much. He has not only a feeling heart but a skilful hand which can project those feelings.



Fire and fury

Horror



Signatures of Bloodshed





A. R. Nagori

A. R. Nagori

Although Nagori completed his art education in 1965, he could not hold a solo exhibition at any art gallery or art centre until his show of 1971 in the American Center, Hyderabad, and of 1972 in the Arts Council, Karachi. His next solo exhibition was held after ten years.

Then, as he himself says. "In 1983, a complete change occurred in my work." Personal frustrations and" the divine dissatisfaction" of poets and artists combined to turn him into an artist, the stormy petrel of Pakistani art. The only exhibition of this kind of work till 1990 was held by him at Karachi in 1986.

The detailed explanatory notes on his paintings that he provided to the visitors read like a grand indictment of our iniquitous society in the words of the artist, for example:

"Sind Ecology and Tridents: In order to clear out 'dacoits', forests are destroyed around river Indus, regardless of flora and fauna and destruction of environment."

"Sacred Law: Happy feudal legislator, riding on four different-coloured women. Woman's suppression is evident and the intellectuals are like three wise men who believed in "See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil."

First of all, it is worth noting that the artist felt it necessary to write a commentary on the paintings which he supplied to the visitors to this exhibition.That means the visual communication of the paintings was not enough and it had to be supplemented with verbal explanation.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that protest and anger and indignation can become the subject of art only if articulated properly in line and colour. Merely raging and ranting, fuming and frothing cannot convey anything and least of all rise to the level of art. Quite often Nagori's work is no better than caricature.

A typical example is the painting entitled "The Blind Adulteress". Lacking the technical ability either to draw and paint the face or the limbs or the posture, he used two white dots to indicate that the girl is blind; very roughly indicating the foetus on the belly of the girl, in white; drawing a white nimbus around the head of the girl, to suggest the intrinsic holiness of the beggar.

Wadera and downcast hari woman



One painting presents the odd sight of Mai Bhagi sitting and singing on her own coffin which is being borne by four puny figures with triangular legs. The crooked hunchback figure of the singer is strangely lopped off at bust level and placed on top of the charpoy on which her own shrouded dead body is lying. What a queer way of showing the singer both dead and alive at the same time!

Plugged into the same composition is the other scene with which the artist wants to contrast the death and unfulfilled wish of Mai Bhagi for performing Haj. A contingent of servicemen is shown ready to board a plane to go off for performing Haj as government guests. A high officer is garlanding the lucky persons. The crude caricature of the soldiers in conical caps, with straight arms and triangular legs, is hilarious.

Though his figures and figure compositions were extremely weak, he was more successful when the decorative element was dominant in the picture. Such is the small square painting entitled "Saqafat" which represents an attractive folk design of Sindh. Another small painting entitled "Rommer" (?) shows a toy windmill of paper each of whose wings is painted in different colours. There is a bigger and even more charming painting showing another such toy windmill with a boy and a girl standing on either side (bust only). Still another painting which is again mainly a design is entitled "Saqafat: Export Item". It shows two Sindhi women sitting and making a large Rilli (patchwork quilt). Although it is spread on the ground, the artist cannot show it in perspective and it looks as if the Rilli is hanging on a wall. However, it serves the purpose better of displaying the particolored design of the fabric. Of course, Nagori cannot miss an

opportunity of making a bitter social comment. So he adds the dead body of a small boy at the bottom. The makers of these beautiful rillis for export cannot afford a shroud for the dead boy.

In a class by itself was the largest painting in the exhibition entitled "Expulsion" which shows in the centre the nude Adam and Eve being turned out of Heaven by a winged angel who is shown wearing a military uniform, in a sideswipe against the military establishment which was ruling in those days. The drawing is quite good and there is no deformation of the figures and faces. The background is appropriately in the form of lush vegetation, which could be more clear if it were not for the artist's habit of messing up the colours and the images. However, at least the main figures in this painting are lucidly depicted, which is more than can be said of many others.

His single-minded devotion to the castigation of social injustice and cruelty has gradually led to maturity both of art and thought. The pent up rage was always there but in art this is useless without the technical skill to express it. His exhibition of 40 paintings held at Karachi in 1992 showed better figure drawing, more meaningful symbolism and a still greater gaudy colourfulness, which is part of his aim to achieve the strongest impact. One canvas depicting a wicked-looking *wadera* (landlord of Sindh) over a downcast, perhaps weeping woman, was very expressive. By dividing the whole canvas into squares or other geometric areas with straight lines and filling each with a strong colour, he gives the painting a modernistic look, despite the realistic figurative work.

In 1993 he participated in a workshop organized by the Goethe Institute in Lahore, at which artists were asked to paint on the subject of violence, with which the country was full. As I had commented then, "If one turns to the work of Nagori, the senses are jarred by festive colours of red and green and yellow, at their brightest, as in his "Book of Hours" and in the children's rotating paper fan. However, he hit upon a good idea in painting the flag of the N.W.O. (New World Order). It has four roughly drawn circles, within which are some dim images but the building of the Capitol (seat of the American Congress) is clear. At the end of the long flag or pennant is a bold suggestion of the Indian flag, and even some sort of a chakra, though not the same as in the Indian flag."

Finally, his latest exhibition of 1994 shows even better articulation of his inner rage at "what man has done to man". Appropriately, he presents his subject in terms of the Sindh village life, where conditions are the worst. He shows commendable ability in composing many figures and in suggesting the horror of the tragedies that are being enacted. In one painting a dead body lies on a cot covered with a Sindhi rilli while around are standing doleful figures. The title of this series was "Black Amongst the Black". He refers to the real natives of Sindh and the Indus Valley who arc now wandering gypsies or bonded labour on the land of the waderas. The artist raises a forceful voice for these ancient Bheels, Kohlies and other neglected sections of the people who have a dark skin and obscure religions but a lively artistic sense as evident from their colourful clothing and articles of daily use. Here he has achieved protest that is also authentic art.



One of a series depicting the alphabet



The apple that led to fall from heaven

"Saqafat (culture).Export Item"





Anwar Saeed

Surrealist Painters

ANWAR SAEED

While most of the artists of Lahore are enthralled by scenes of nature and, second to that, by the quaint and colourful streets of that historic city, Anwar Saeed is one of the few who are deeply affected by the human condition.

The evolution of his art makes an interesting study. Although he graduated from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1978, his first solo exhibition was held in 1984 at the height of the decade-long martial law regime in Pakistan. On display were drawings and paintings in what he called his Window Series. "Every painting had a window which represented the bridge between the internal and external world", as he himself explained. "It showed the contrast between the inner desire for peace, beauty and affection, and the turbulence of the outer world where everything was aflame, people were being persecuted and executed."

This was an art of loud protest explicitly rendered. He felt very strongly about the suffocation and suffering of the people and again expressed it in his "Walls and Doors Series " exhibited in 1986. The idea of oppressive confinement within unyielding walls and the tenuous hope of freedom glimpsed through tempting doors were fairly obvious symbols that he invented to project his feelings.

Another series in which art was used as a weapon against political repression had the Identity Card as a format for each painting, as this card is itself the mark of dictatorial regimes. As in the card, the artist used boxes, grids, numbers and signatures but in the place where the photograph of the card holder is pasted, he showed a screaming face.

Martial law was lifted on the last day of 1985 and a civilian government was installed soon after. The terror and the horrors of martial law, which is no law, came to an end but not the story of human suffering, which has no end. Anwar Saeed no longer felt the need to scream at the tormentor but still there was much to deplore. When he held his next solo exhibition in 1987 at Islamabad, the etchings and prints on display were full of political satire in which he lampooned the misdoings of the establishment.

Another rich vein that he struck in his 1987 exhibition was the twilight zone of sleep and man's life in it. He painted a whole " Sleepers" series based on sketches of people sleeping in the public parks of Lahore or in the streets. Changing the setting into a hazy world of dim apparitions and cloudy skies with the dimly seen moon, he invites the viewer to enter the dreamscape, the internal landscape of the sleeper. While the involuntary movements of the sleeper bring close, almost indiscreet, intimacy, the ineffable calm suggests momentary release from the torments of life and the pleasures of a certain freedom.

In the 1991 exhibition held at Islamabad we find him troubled by thoughts of liberty

"Love is a Lung Fish I"



Man falling in sleep



and the loss of liberty but at a deeply personal level. He is now thinking of the limitations, disabilities and instability of the individual, not of the nation or society.

He is obsessed with the idea of instability, displacement, alienation. Some of the figures float in weightlessness. They have no firm ground, nothing to hold on to. In the hazy, blue-green colours and the tantalizing sectional glimpses of the subject, there is room for reading more than one meaning and building up more than one story.

The levitation of the figure can also mean freedom from the terrestial world and entry into another world of weightlessnes.

He does not hesitate to cast the net of his imagination on the world of the soul. His painting "Soul II" shows the shirt only of a man with outstretched hands; the man is missing. The soul apparently lurks in the sectional panels above where unidentifiable shapes are dimly visible in varying halftones.

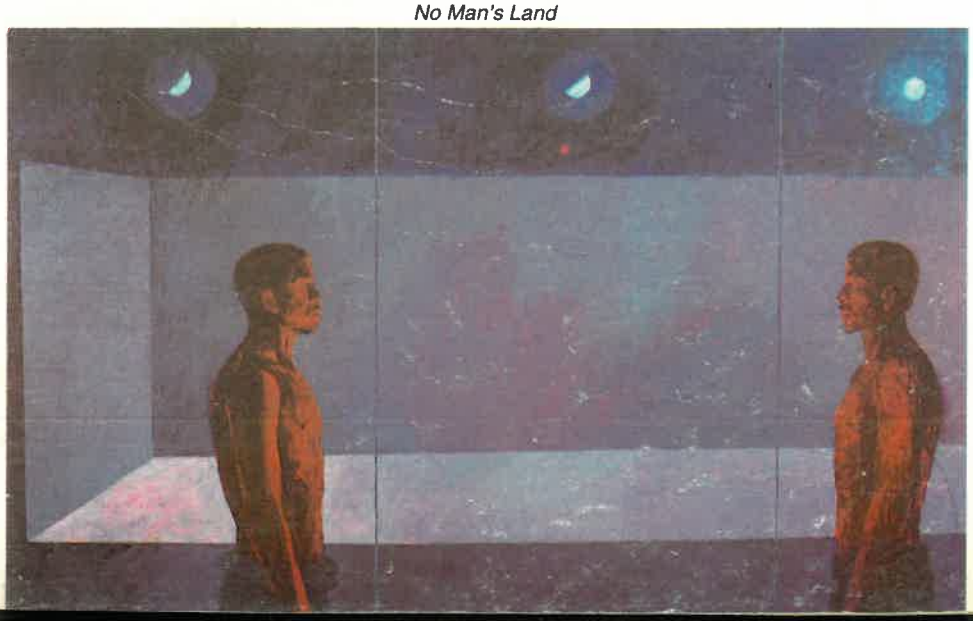
The eerie world of the spirit again appears in some of the work exhibited in 1992 at Karachi. "Man Playing Chess with an imaginary Opponent" shows an unearthly scene of hazy blues and greens in which one man is shown fairly clearly, sitting on the ground, with a chessboard before him, while another wrapped up figure is sitting opposite whose head and outline is made luminous and the half-visible face too, to suggest a ghostly presence.

Discussion of the subject should not lead us to ignore the artistry of the work which lies in the design and the colour treatment. In this example the rectangle is divided horizontally into two equal panels by a broad brown belt. The two figures are in the lower half but their heads stick out into the brown belt. The upper half is divided into three parts, almost square. In the left square is vaguely suggested a flag on which a bright half-moon is shining in a halo. In the centre square is a triangle, the sign of danger, while in the right square only a tall thin object (tower?) is vaguely visible in the distance. The whole is invested in a colourful mist. The moon and the triangle are both ominous and baleful symbols often used by the artist to suggest a mysterious world.

A somewhat similar subject and composition can be seen in his "No Man's Land". Again the broad middle strip has a stage-like boxed area, heavily illuminated, while in the narrower upper and lower dark strips are, respectively the crescent, the half and the full moon, spaced out, and (in the lower strip) two men standing face to face at the two ends, whose bare torsos rise high almost to the upper level of the back stage wall. The viewer and viewed are the same, as the man is contemplating his own inner world and the world of the spirit, the vast Unknown or "No Man's Land".

A plain statement of the content of his paintings does not do justice to the intentionally vague, suggestive and evocative creations of Anwar Saeed. One can read more meaning by directly viewing the paintings and exploring the twilight world of the subconscious conjured up by the artist.

No Man's Land





Sleep-walker

ANWAR SAEED

1955 Born at Lahore.
1978 Diploma from NCA, Lahore.
1984-85 Post-graduate studies, Royal College of Art, London.
1985 till now ('95) Teaching Print Making at NCA



Ghalib Baqar

SYED GHALIB BAQAR

A group of young water colour landscape painters emerged at Karachi in the early 70s, most of whom graduated from the Karachi School of Art and went out together to paint landscapes on location. Among these were Abdul Hayee, Zahin Ahmad, and Ghalib Baqar, who graduated in 1971, 1974 and 1975 respectively, also M. Yousuf and Dr. Manzoor, who were self-taught.

They were all realistic painters in the beginning but Ghalib Baqar and Zahin Ahmed branched off into experimental work.

Till 1981, Ghalib Baqar lived in Quetta where he was teaching at the Arts Council of Balochistan. Then he emerged from his seclusion and entered one of his landscapes in the Sindh Professional Painters Exhibition held at the Arts Council, Karachi, in 1983. He won the First Prize in Water Colour.

Later in the same year he held his first solo exhibition in Karachi, which was very well received. At that time, this writer had commented:

"Now that realistic landscape is again finding favour with the artists, this medium (water colour) has also got resurrected. Ghalib Baqar is using it with great distinction. His landscapes, and even more so his seascapes, have that lightness of touch, those limpid hues and transparent effects that are the peculiar charm of this medium."

For the same kind of work, he obtained the First Prize in Water Colour at the All-Pakistan Exhibition held at Peshawar by the Abasin Arts Council in 1974.

However, when he made his mark at the national level and won the First Prize in the Non-Oil Section of the First Art Biennale of Pakistan, 1987, held at Lahore in January, 1988, his work was no more realistic though it still had the elements of a landscape. Reality had been largely dissolved into fantasy. It was quite a large vertical picture of 22 x 30 inches dimly suggesting a mountain landscape. On top was a very dark band, dripping at the lower edge, like storm clouds; then an expanse of sky; then a sweeping arc of what looked like snow-covered mountains lost in mist and shot with many colours; below that, in the foreground, the mountains sloped into an icy dark-green lake, edged with weeds and sedge. Nothing is tangible, sure and certain. Rather, it is all dreamlike, misty and magical, in a word, Surrealistic.

In 1984, he also painted a portrait in the same Surrealist style. He has depicted the face of artist Ali Imam quite faithfully, but, in the manner of the Surrealists, he has placed it mysteriously in an odd setting, which turns the portrait into a vision.

In 1985, we find him painting the old abandoned houses of Thatta with their crumbling mud and wooden frames and odd looking wind catchers on top. Both Baqar and Zahin Ahmed painted and exhibited them together in a group show, the former in oil and the latter in water colour. The decaying wood and mud structures were given a haunted look by bathing them in clouds of mist in the middle and making them melt and flow at the bottom. A strong light is played on some of the doors and windows so that the mouldings and projections cast dark shadows and look eerie and mysterious.

In the later years he painted many landscapes very much like the one that won him the first prize in the First Art Biennale of Pakistan, 1987 with the same indifference to clear realistic depiction of landscape features and preoccupation with the mysterious aura, the vaporous presences, the spectral haze. In this style, the brush has more freedom and many interesting tonal effects are created in which the beauty of the water colour medium is revealed. None was as good as the first.

By mid-1990, he had travelled still farther away from realism towards abstraction and Surrealism, as was evident from the half a dozen water colour "landscapes" that he entered in the Summer Show of the American Center, Karachi, and from the twenty, thirty other water colours that he showed this writer privately.

GHALIB BAQAR

1956 (Mar.)	Born
1975	Diploma in Fine Arts from Karachi School of Art.
1983	First Prize in water colour in Sindh Artists Annual Exhibition, Karachi.
1984	First Prize in water colour at Abasin Arts Council Annual Exhibition, Peshawar.
1987	First Prize in water colour in First Art Biennale Pakistan '87.

Visionary World



In these paintings there are no recognizable forms but always there is a suggestion of sky above and ground below, or waves of water. The upper half is light, the lower heavy. The upper has vertical strokes or vertically sweeping and flowing colour, while the lower has horizontal strokes or sweeps of colour or layers of mist or waves of water or ice floes or heaps of boulders.

In many cases, there is a dark band of colour at the top like storm clouds, below which may be a light strip and then another dark. From this, colour drips and light streams down in sheets or bursts of radiance. The interplay of light and darkness that he achieves by cunning manipulation of the water colour is fascinating.

The stretch of sky ends on the horizon which is lost in clouds and streamers of mist. This uncertain dubious area divides the empty space from the darker, heavier and more solid base which may be made up of piles of boulders or waves of water. However, its solidness too is reduced by the fact that the coloured forms are more like mists, fading off at the edges. Through them glow lights of various intensity and shapes. To create these lighter effects on dark colour, whether long streaks or oval patches, requires great technical skill but Baqar has devised some method by which he brings off these difficult effects of images in reverse.

It is this play of light in the clouds and mists of the sky and also on the ground or water below that creates eerie, dreamy and unearthly scenes. Also it involves many ingenious tricks and techniques that Baqar has developed to create these very unusual and difficult colouristic effects, or rather light effects, because they are mostly in reverse.

In short, Ghalib Baqar's water colour paintings just barely suggest a landscape because there is a sky above and ground or water below but everything is bathed in mist and shot with light. As colour seeps and flows and fades off downward from the sky, cascades of light and luminosity of many shapes is created in the enclosed blank spaces. This radiance is sometimes shot with colour and laced with streamers of mist. Below is either ground or water. The ground often suggests hills rising on either side and scattered boulders half lost in wisps and patches of mist, as if on the top of some very high mountain.

The boulders also are insubstantial objects, blank reverse images within the surrounding colour. Around and below them too are many blank and misty streaks and stripes that turn the scene airy and ethereal.



Landscape of the Soul

Fish harbour, Karachi



All Clouds and Colours



Abid Husain Qureshi



Abid Husain Qureshi

ABID HUSAIN QURESHI

1946	Born at Lahore
1968	M.F.A. (Punjab University)
1973	M.A. in Oil Painting (Tokyo National University).
1975	M. Phil. (Ecole Nationale Superieur des Arts Decoratif, Paris).
1976-84	Research in Embryology at Kawasaki, Japan.
1984-89	Lecturer in Fine Art Department, Punjab.
1987	First one-man show (at PNCA, Islamabad).
1990 till now	Lecturer in Balochistan University, Quetta.

Abid Husain Qureshi (b. 1 946) obtained his M.A. degree in Fine Arts from the Punjab University but then lived abroad for a long time, so that he came into prominence only in 1985 and actually held his first solo show in Pakistan in 1987.

He studied in the National University of Art, Tokyo, 1970-73 and at the National University of Decorative Arts, Paris, 1973-75, obtaining M.A. and M.Phil, degrees, respectively. From 1976 to 1984 he did scientific research in Embryology at Tokyo.

He himself gave the title "Existentialism and Abid Husain Qureshi" to the two big solo exhibitions of his paintings that he held at Islamabad in September, 1987, and at Lahore in November. 1988. Existentialism, as propounded by Jean Paul Sartre, is an atheistic philosophy according to which man is a totally free agent who shapes his own destiny, which results in anguish and dread in confronting the problems of life.

Abid is certainly not an atheist, as can be seen from the frequency with which he uses the symbolic battle of Karbala as a subject of his paintings. But anguish and dread can often be felt in his work.

Another tenet of existentialism is the belief that reason is an inadequate means for understanding the phenomena of life. Thus intuition is given importance and in this way, the subconscious also comes into play. One of the chief expressions of the subconscious is in dreams and this is much exploited in Surrealist art. Dreams and visions are the very substance of Abid's paintings. He claims that while he was in Japan, he received certain revelations which he painted from March, 1979 to September, 1984, in the form of large oil paintings, and brought these with him to Pakistan.

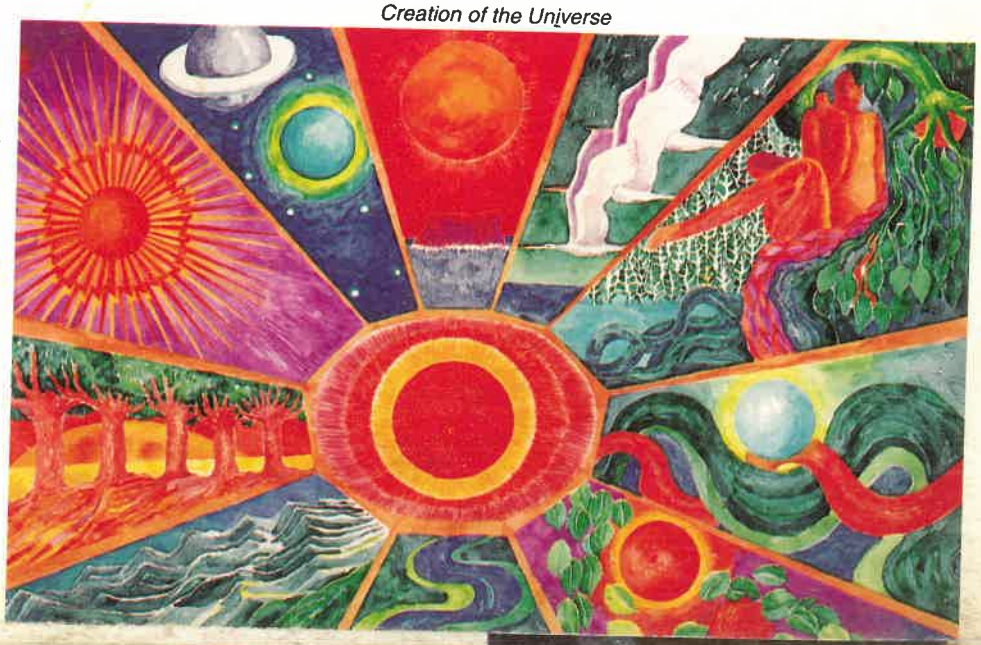
Some idea of the visionary nature of Abid's paintings can be gathered from the paintings reproduced here. One which he calls "The Great Traditions of Islam" is supposed to represent the spirit of sacrifice and eternal, ineffable faith shown by the handful of men of the Holy Prophet's family who laid down their lives in the ideological battle of Karbala. Innumerable hands rise in a sea of blood affirming their faith and determination, while in the bloodshot sky, sets a huge sun whose upper segment only is visible above the horizon. However, inextinguishable hope rises in the form of another small sun signifying that all is not lost. It is a fearsome, awesome and yet inspiring vision.

Almost the same idea is expressed in another painting which he calls "The Ashamed Sun of Karbala" and here the hands, sky and sun are much better painted and the composition is more ingenious . Still more striking in colour and composition is what he calls " The Potential Reality". Only, the figure at the bottom is rather crude.

Ashamed Sun of Karbala



Creation of the Universe



Samina Mansuri



Samina Mansuri

Samina Mansuri (b. 1956) came back to Pakistan only at the end of 1990 after eight years in New York where she studied and practised art. So her work is not so well known as it should be, though she has exhibited in group shows and even in the National Art Exhibition 1994 at Islamabad. Her entry there was a striking example of her work - both the imagery and the technique.

It showed two of those thorny balls (poison apples) whose unusual form has enticed her and can be seen full below and sideways up right. Likewise, she is obessed by the tubular form seen in two paintings here, which is somehow linked in her imagination with the thorny ball. In various paintings, through it seems to be passing sap or seeds or blood is spouting out. Or, it simply wiggles or snaps and droops.

She is quite unable to explain in words but agrees that it could be the umblical cord. The picture up right has the same kind of bunched fibres at the end as the Fallopian tube. It could have other meanings too.

The thorny ball (a pair, in one painting) could mean something alluring and yet forbidding like the forbidden fruit or female breasts.

It is all mystifying but pregnant with meaning or rather meanings for each would construe it differently.

The technique too is arresting for she uses oil paint on canvas but often mixes it with bee wax which is heated and mixed with pigment to be used as encaustic, a pliable medium. She even grinds rocks of many colours and builds thick surfaces on wood-based canvas to incise or emboss (intaglio or cameo), almost like sculpture.

She feels strongly that certain images or effects demand certain media and material.

Thus, Samina is a sensitive vehicle for the visitations of meaningful images and also an artificer exploring the possibilities of many media. For her, neither the image nor the medium are ready-made but grow and emerge in her hands. Her work is part intuition and part experiment.

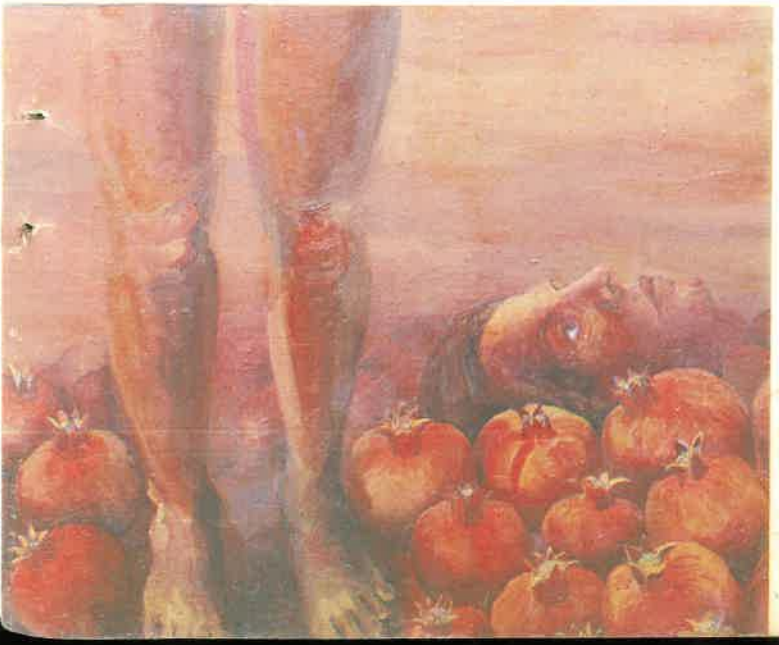


Night Journey (39" x 39") Oil and bee wax on canvas and wood

SAMINA MANSURI

1956 Born.
1973-77 Earned Diploma from Central Institute of Art, Karachi.
1982-85 Earned BFA degree in Graphic Design from Pratt Institute, New York.
1983-88 Worked as Designer in New York.
1988-90 Studied drawing, painting and sculpture at New York Studio Scool, New York.
End of 1990 Returned to Pakistan
1991-93 Takes some classes in an art school.

Pomegrenates I Oil on canvas.



Vigil (39" x 39") Oil and bee wax on canvas and wood





Iqbal Geoffrey

Iqbal Geoffrey

He takes a scrubber of baked clay, with an abrasive surface, which is used to scrub the body during bathing, frames it and hangs it in his exhibition with the caption "Portrait of an Art Critic". Then there is a "Self-Portrait with the Director General of Culture" in which the latter is shown as an ass and the former as a bag of carrots and radishes. Put on display also is an eleven foot pole with the direction that it could be used to touch one's Lower Self (Nafs in Urdu). Another prize exhibit is a tattered old bag, with the caption "Anything you put in it becomes Art". Also exhibited is a fancy wooden rack of the old colonial days used for hanging coats and hats. The space where the mirror used to be is painted black, for the visitors to gaze into. "The honest ones are black and the dishonest ones are Moon-kala" (meaning in Urdu, dishonoured, disgraced). Another prize exhibit is the bare frame of a wooden cot or bedstead, which has not been woven with strings and so has no place to sit. The caption says, "Where should I sit?". Another bizarre exhibit is a steel frame from which are hanging the words "Halaat" (meaning circumstances, in Urdu) with the caption, "Public hanging of circumstances" (Halaat Sooli Per, in Urdu, with the last letter changed from the soft 't' to the hard 't', in order to emphasise the hardness of the circumstances). The biggest gimmick of all is the blank space left where Exhibit No. 13 should have been. It was simply not there because the artist explained that the painting had committed suicide. This was his exhibition held at Lahore in 1985, something of a lark.

One is reminded by these artistic antics of the anti-art and anti-rational style called Dadaism invented by the French artist Duchamp and practiscd by him only from 1916 to 1922. Seventy years ago he had put on exhibition a "Portrait of Cezanne" which was no more than a toy monkey put in a frame. He also put up bottle racks and snow shovels with his signatures on them, and offered them as works of art. He it was too who exhibited a reproduction of Leonardo's Mona Lisa after he had added a moustache to it.

When Duchamp launched the Dada movement in 1916, in the middle of World War 1, the nihilism of his art was a protest movement declaring that all established values, moral and aesthetic, had been rendered meaningless by the catastrophe of the great war. But even he could not keep up this raving and ranting for more than a few years. and now Iqbal Geoffrey is taking up the strain after three quarters of a century under vastly different conditions. If anything, he is out-Herodiing Herod. It is reported that Marcel Duchamp visited Iqbal Jeoffrey's first one-man show in New York at the Grand Central in 1963 and exclaimed, "To call him an astonishing phenomenon is an understatement. Compared to Geoffrey, I am a conventional artist."

Dadaist Painter

IQBAL GEOFFREY

1939 (Jan. 1)	Born.
1957	B.A. from Government College, Lahore.
1959	L.L.B.
1960	Arrived in London.
1962-85	Lived in U.S.A.
1964 (Nov.).	Solo exhibition in Miami Museum of Modern Art, U.S.A. Many other exhibitions in USA and London.
1985	Solo exhibitions in Lahore and Karachi.
1989,90,91	Solo exhibitions at Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore respectively.



His work is known in Pakistan only from the exhibitions he held at Lahore in 1985 and at Karachi in 1989. After this was written, he has held more exhibitions in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. From 1960 to 1985, he lived tor two years in Britain and for the rest in the States. However, it seems that he painted only from 1960 to 1965, because in the brochure published by the Indus Gallery of Karachi, on the occasion of his exhibition there in 1989, it is stated, "Actively involved in art since 1960." Again, in the small book entitled "Re: J. Iqbal Geoffrey, a collection of critical essays edited by David Luisi" and published in 1974 by the Central Washington State College, Luisi states in the "Afterword" or Epilogue: "Even though 1qbal Geoffrey received the golden acclaim of both critics and historians, he nonetheless formally stopped painting in 1965."

His work of these five years, of which the first two were spent in Britain and the rest in the States, won him the admiration of the topmost art critics. In Britain, Sir Herbert Read, Basil Gray, Nobert Lynton, John Russel, Denys Sutton and Robert Melville wrote on him. In America, highly complimentary essays on him were written by such eminent art historians as H.W. Janson, Charles Licka, Thomas Leavitt and Kenneth Sawyer. All these are included in the book edited by Luisi mentioned above.

However, no reproductions of his art work of those days are available, except two or three published in the brochure of his exhibition at the Miami Museum of Art in 1964, and those are hardly commensurate with the laudatory comments made on them.

One is on more firm ground in trying to understand the work of Iqbal Geoffrey on the basis of the "works of art" he displayed at Karachi in 1985 after a lapse of twentyone years and again in 1989. One finds that he tears a few pieces of paper from magazines and newspapers and puts them together on another sheet of paper, either plain or printed, and frames it, and there is a "work of art".

He gets hold of colour charts distributed by paint manufacturers, cuts a series of specimens of colour, pastes them on a sheet vertically, adds on top a band of green colour, sticks over that two triangles cut out of gold paper. This is framed and you have another work of art.

Most of the work in the exhibition was done in black ink. There were all kinds of patches, doodles, smears and scribbles, all done with careful carelessness, so as not to look beautiful by any chance, and this is offered as avant-garde art.

He has a few tricks of the trade which he uses again and again. The commonest is to paint a big patch in black ink, or two patches, and scribble some words in Urdu on it.

Though not in his Karachi exhibition of 1989 but in that of 1985 there was plenty of art work that had saucy comments and biting satire on society and its crass materialism and cruel insensitivity. This he represents with such symbols as the pizza, the Rolls Royce, the Order of Merit, "the love pill", "ticket to a good meal" and other such images.

Sometimes the work contains humorous glimpses and sidelights on contemporary life, like his picture entitled (in Urdu) "Melting Man and the Season of Dearness", and "Portrait of a Modern Girl from Lalukhet" (a poor area in Karachi) and "An artist from Yakki Gate" (a poor area of Lahore).

Though the whole approach is trifling, bantering, whimsical and quizzical, like the Dadaists, there is social awareness and a feeling heart behind the work as far as the subject goes.

The artistic rendering is ingenious, innovative and often quite striking, because he paints life with life. He represents life with bits and pieces of life: pictures, photographs. stamps, strings, seals, locks of hair, ribbons, anything picked up from the roadside.

With the least possible recourse to drawing or painting, he creates compositions that are neatly balanced and which have a variety of shapes, textures, colours and material elements and ingredients. Much of it is hilarious gimmickry but there is a charm in its oddity and novelty and queerness which can be sometimes quite thought-provoking or simply provoking and thus able to shake us out of our settled notions of art. As an example of the last may be mentioned his entry in the National Exhibition of 1994—a tub full of cattle feed.





Calligraphic Painters

Calligraphy has always been the most honoured of the arts among the Muslims all over the world. However, with the fall of the Mughals and the advent of British rule, calligraphy, like all the other arts and cultural expressions of the Muslims, lost its former prestige. The coming of the printing press dealt another serious blow to the art of calligraphy. The first Urdu printing press, using lead type, was set up in 1800 at the Fort William College of Calcutta. Printing by type never found favour with the public. Then, luckily, the art of lithographic printing was invented in 1796 by Aloys Senefelder of Germany. Used in Europe for printing drawings and paintings, it was adapted in Indo-Pakistan to print Urdu books. These had to be written by calligraphers and again their art came into great demand. Of course, calligraphing the pages of a book for printing, which meant turning out many pages every day, could not lead to the production of masterpieces and works of art but at least it provided bread and butter for the calligraphers. Then they could write panels (wasli, as it is called) with a verse of the Quran or two lines of a poem, or whatever, as artistic self-expression. In this way, the art was able to survive, though without its former glamour.

When Pakistan came into being in 1947, the great centre of calligraphy was Lahore and the pre-eminent calligraphers were Abdul Majid Parveen Raqam, (1891-1949) who calligraphed most of the books of the poet Iqbal, and Tajuddin Zarrin Raqam (1906-1955).

In Karachi such great masters of this art came from India and settled here as Munshi Muhammed Yousuf Dehlavi (d.1977) who once calligraphed the Quranic verses for the black cover of the Holy Ka'aba (which was later embroidered in gold) and wrote the inscriptions on the great public buildings of New Delhi, the Secretariat and the Viceregal Lodge. Then from the Deccan came Sayed Shah Ghulam Mahmood Qadri, Mustajab Raqam, who designed the Urdu alphabet for the Urdu typewriter.

However, calligraphy was not being publicized and popularised as painting was, through the holding of exhibitions and prominent projection in the press. In this respect, credit for taking the first initiative goes to Mukhtar Masood who was Deputy Commissioner of Bahawalpur in 1960 and who organized the first all-Pakistan exhibition of calligraphy in that year at Bahawalpur. The first prize went to Muhammed Shafi Anwar, who was working at that time in the newspaper "Nawai Waqt" at Lahore; the second to Muhammed Bakhsh Jamil Raqam, who was working as a painter in the railway workshop at Lahore; and the third prize to Muhammed Siddiq Almas Raqam (1907-1972) of Sialkot.

Slowly people began to take greater notice of this ancient art but what is more important, the painters were attracted towards it and they began to paint words like any other objects, such as trees or clouds or houses or people. They drew and painted the words freely and creatively, without strictly following the traditional styles but of course this work, like all their other work, was governed by the principles of balance and proportion, rhythm and unity without which no work of art can be produced.



Musawwaraana Khattaati
(Painterly Calligraphy)



Hanif Ramay

HANIF RAMAY

The earliest artist to practice this innovative form called painterly calligraphy was Hanif Ramay. He emerged in 1955 as a purely abstract painter and held exhibitions at Lahore and Karachi. After that, he turned to calligraphy and found in Arabic letters and words very suitable material for making abstract compositions. His calligraphy was in small size and done on paper. He used only single words like Allah and Muhammed or short phrases like Bismillah and La-ilaha-illallah and did not write long verses of the Quran. But these few words or a single word he exaggerated and modified and stylized into an artistic design, always maintaining its clear legibility. This he then painted in attractive colours mostly flat, and thus created a work that was part calligraphy and part painting. He created a few of these briefly written, sparsely composed and simply coloured painterly calligraphies in the 50s and they were published in some magazines, such as the Urdu monthly "Mah-e-Nau", exciting much wonder and admiration. But it was a seven day's wonder and he did not pursue it. He revived his calligraphy during his stay at the University of California, Berkeley, 1980-83, and on return to Pakistan, held an exhibition of his work at Lahore in 1985. There is now definitely more boldness and force and freedom in his calligraphy, less of the old whimsical distortions and greater command of the shapes and forms of the words as established by classical calligraphy. The colouring is now flat and simple, (there was more texture before) but the space division created by areas of different colour makes an attractive pattern.



"La-ilaha il-Allah"

Aasalatoo wasalam ala Muhammed



HANIF RAMAY

1931 (Mar. 1)	*Born at Sheikhupura*
1953	*One-man show of paintings in Fine Arts Deptt. of Punjab University.*
1956	*Solo show of paintings in Karachi.*
1954-72	*Edited Urdu weeklies "Savera" and "Nusrat" and daily "Musawaat".*
1962-63	*Solo calligraphy shows at Lahore and Rawalpindi.*
1970	*Elected member of Punjab Assembly*
1972-74	*Finance Minister of Punjab.*
1975	*Chief Minister of Punjab*
1985	*Solo calligraphy show at Alhamra Art Council, Lahore.*
1988	*Solo Calligraphy show at San Diego, Calif., USA.*
1992	*Solo calligraphy show at Lahore.*
1992	*Solo calligraphy show of names of Holy Prophet, Lahore.*
1993	*Elected Speaker of Punjab Assembly*
1994	*Calligraphy exhibition at Lahore.*

SHAKIR ALI



Some verses from the Quran's Ayat-ul-Kursi

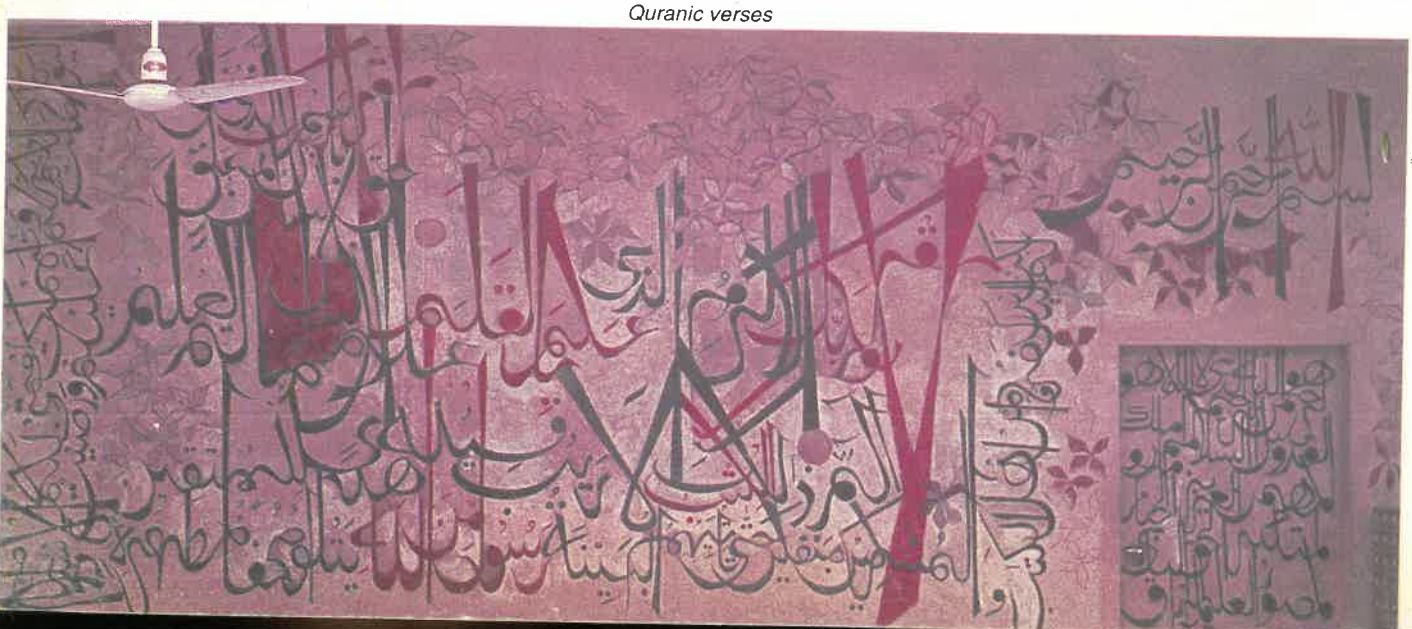
Shakir Ali (1914-75) was among the first artists to practice painterly calligraphy. He was an eminent artist of Lahore who is considered the father of modern art in Pakistan. Still life was his favourite subject and also birds, bulls, horses and people but in everything, he searched out and abstracted the basic geometrical form. Perhaps because of his love of abstraction, he was drawn towards the Arabic script as yet another fit element for his abstract compositions. After all, Arabic words also were made up of the same arcs and loops, ovals and circles, vertical and horizontal lines as used in abstract designs. Out of the many styles of writing, Shakir Ali chose the elegant Ta'aliq and wrote Quranic verses in very large size for three huge murals that he painted. One was in the Quran Room of the Punjab Public Library at Lahore, one in the National Bank at Lahore, and one in PINSTECH (Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Technology) at Nilor near Islamabad. The first covers a whole wall and comprises the first verse revealed to the Holy Prophet out of the whole Quran, beginning with the exhortation "Iqra" or "Read". He has greatly exaggerated the vertical strokes of the words, modified the recurring half-circles and generally shaped the style of writing according to his own requirements of design. The areas enclosed or bordered by the words have been filled with many colours but mainly various shades of yellow and red and some green. The colour is not quite flat but lightly textured and shaded here and there with another colour. The linear pattern of the words and the area pattern or space division in colour make a splendid composition. This is further enlivened by leaves and flowers scattered here and there.

The calligraphic mural made for the National Bank of Lahore is a long panel with verses from the Quran.

For the PINSTECH, he painted a huge triptych in the form of pages of an old illuminated manuscript, with decorative borders, and in this he calligraphed the noble verses of the "Ayat-ul-Kursi" or The Chapter of the Throne, from the Quran.

Shakir Ali's innovative work in painterly calligraphy had a strong influence on other painters because of his immense prestige as an artist, his influential position as Principal of the premier art institution of the country, the National College of Art, from 1961 to 1973, and the fact that his calligraphy was in the form of large murals on permanent display at important public places where they were seen by thousands. He had blazed the trail but he did not pursue it because calligraphy was only one of the many subjects that he painted and anyway, he died in 1975.

Quranic verses



SADEQUAIN

Neither Shakir Ali nor Hanif Ramay had a basic grounding in the ancient art of Muslim calligraphy. Sadequain (1930-1987), however, was descended from seven generations of calligraphers and early in life had received training in the traditional styles of this art. For fifteen years, 1953 to 1968, he had been painting and had produced an enormous body of work. Then, by chance, he discovered his latent ability as a calligrapher, when, in November, 1968, he put up an exhibition of twentyfive paintings illustrating the verses of Ghalib. With each painting he appended a panel on which he calligraphed the relevant verse of Ghalib. This gave him the idea to further use his talent. The next month was Ramzan, the holy month of fasts, and Sadequain thought it would be appropriate to put up an exhibition of Quranic calligraphy in the form of paintings. This work he completed and exhibited in December, 1968 and for the next fifteen or sixteen years, a veritable Niagara of painterly calligraphy flowed from his pen and brush. These were exhibited or gifted or installed all over Pakistan and, in fact, all over the world, with the result that calligraphic painting gained popularity and prestige in Pakistan, and Sadequain became a household word.

His output of painterly calligraphy was prodigious but mention can made here of some of his major works. He wrote the beautiful chapter of the Quran called the Sura Rahman three times, once on canvas, once on transparent thick cellophane and once on marble slabs. Each was in the form of a series of panels with the recurring refrain (Fa bi-ayyi-aalai Rabbi-kuma tukazzibaan) written very boldly in the form of a compact design, every time differently, and the rest of the verse written below in small letters. The whole background was a pictorial illustration of the words of the relevant verses which were calligraphed, such as gardens full of fruit trees, the sea with tall ships, the sky studded with stars and so on.

Then he wrote the chapter of the Quran called Sura Yaseen on 260 feet long wooden panels and this is installed in the Islamic Gallery of the Lahore Museum.

But by far the greatest calligraphic work of his life was the series of Asma-ul-Husna (the Beautiful Names of God) that he wrote on the round wall of the central rotunda rising five stories high in the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies at Delhi. Since the rotunda is 144 feet round and five stories high, that adds up to 720 feet and as the calligraphic mural is four feet broad, its total area is 2,880 square feet.

Sadequain developed a distinct style of his own which anyone can easily recognize. One prominent feature of his style is the practice of writing one letter within another, as in the Suls style, but even more so. Thus, his writing proceeds in the form of small clusters of letters or a series of small designs. For this he turns horizontal strokes and circles and semicircles of various letters into arcs that taper off to the left. There is one arc within another and the outermost often curves round into a spiral. His letters are as high as the strip or band within which the words are being written. They fill the given space. In this respect again Sadequain's style is near Suls. Then a favourite practice of Sadequain is to write the full letter as far as possible and not its short form. According to the needs of the design, he often elongates the horizontal strokes and less often the vertical strokes too. He fills the empty space around the words with an endless variety of decorative designs and ingenious ornaments and variously painted backgrounds and sometimes even landscapes relevant to the subject of the verses.







From top: *Callegraphy on recessed arches of Islamic Gallery, of Lahore Museum.*

Some words from Sura Ar-Rahman.

Opening words of Suras beginning with letters Swaad, Quaaf, and Noon.



Aftab Ahmed

AFTAB AHMED

Aftab Ahmed (b. 1936) has inherited the art of calligraphy from his father, M. M. Sharif, the distinguished calligrapher of Peshawar who originally hailed from Gujranwala.

Aftab is a versatile artist who excels not only in calligraphy but in photography, etching, ceramics and painting.

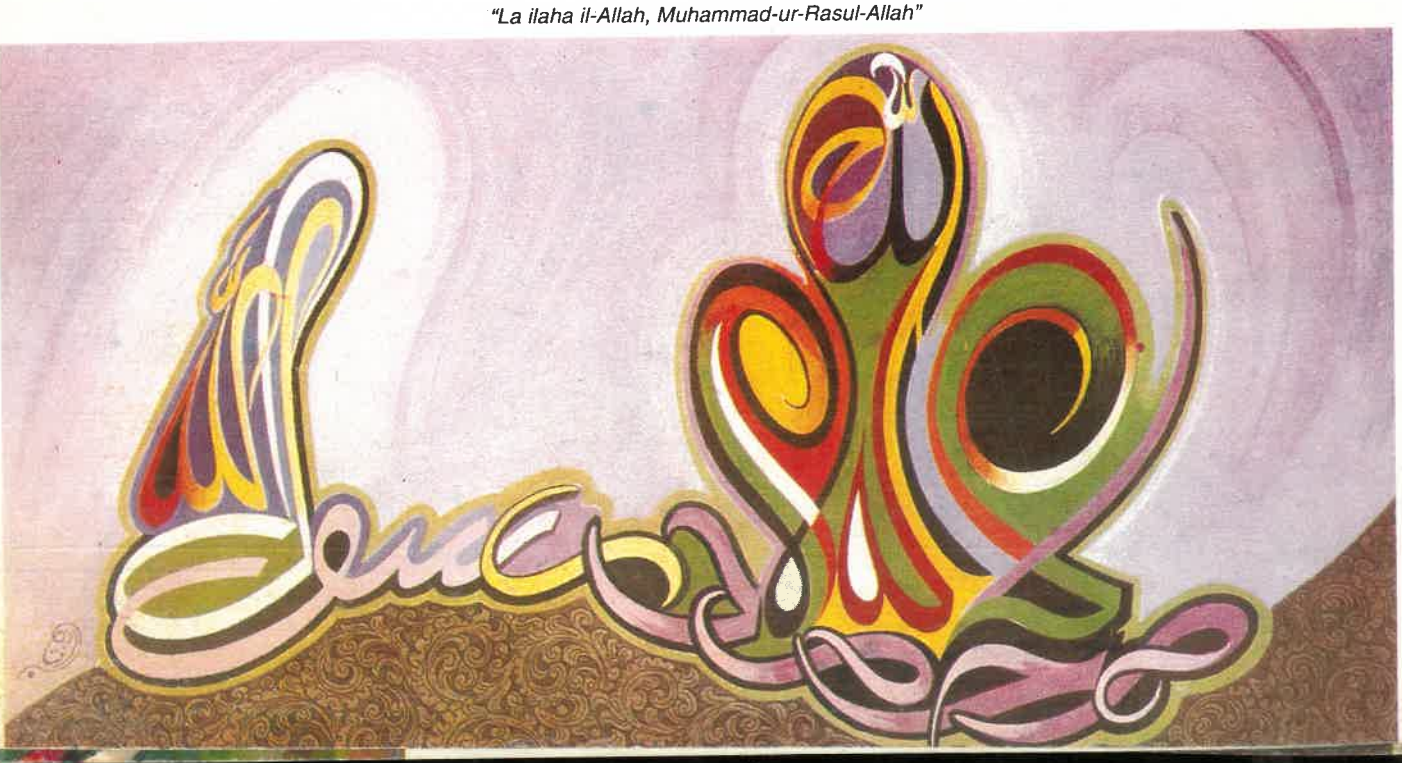
He has been dedicatedly serving the art of calligraphy and has written two books on this art. The one in Urdu is entitled "Noon wal Qalam" and the English book, which is profusely illustrated is entitled "Islamic Calligraphy.

His command over classical calligraphy was recognised when he was awarded the first prize for calligraphy in the 5th National Art Exhibition of 1984. He had put up a very beautifully designed and minutely decorated panel in which he had written brief texts in five old recognized styles of Kufic.

In the next national art exhibition, which was called The First Art Biennale of Pakistan 1987, he put up a 30 x 20 inches panel which was a superb example of painterly calligraphy. The opening prayer of the Quran, called the Sura-tul-Fatiha, was beautifully written in two curving diagonal lines. The style of writing was a blend of Naskh and Diwani. The main word was formed roughly as in Naskh but the last letter was rendered with a sweeping flourish, as in Diwani. Another liberty taken was the use of the letter "hay" and "ain" and some others written full instead of the short form, as is usual. The result is a very elegant cursive style of writing which is different from all others and therefore quite original.

Then the text has been set within a decorative background which has been very aptly laid out. The decoration is somewhat like the fringes of lace and goes very well with the delicate style of the writing.

"La ilaha il-Allah, Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah"



ASLAM KAMAL

Aslam Kamal (b. 1939) is another leading calligraphic painter. Without any formal training in art, he began his artistic career in 1961 by designing book covers.

In 1976, one year after he held his first solo exhibition of calligraphic paintings, he was awarded a gold medal by the Cultural Society of the Punjab University in the All Pakistan Calligraphic Paintings Exhibition. In 1981, he was awarded the first prize in the All Pakistan Calligraphic Paintings Exhibition organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Aslam Kamal has taken the ancient Kufic style of writing as his starting point and has made modifications in it. Simple Kufi was written with short straight vertical and horizontal strokes turning at right angles. Decorative Kufi took many other forms, some highly ornate. Aslam Kamal's style is also a variation of Simple Kufi because basically he uses straight vertical and horizontal lines but he makes the vertical very thick, like a narrow rectangle, and the horizontal lines he ends with a small triangle, merged into the line, so that the end sticks up. This same small triangle is used to make many other letters.

Besides the writing, he provides a very colourful and attractive background to the words. Space division is done geometrically into squares and rectangles of various sizes behind and around the words and these are filled flat with bright colours. The outer area spreading on either side is painted in neutral colours. Sometimes the words are enclosed in an outline that follows roughly the outer contours of the words, but always in straight lines and geometrical angles and all this area is filled with colour. The rest of the outer space spreading on either side is filled with another colour, a different one for the right and the left sides.

But what is the mark of Aslam Kamals' calligraphic compositions and almost like his signature is the addition of tiny turrets above and on the sides and sometimes even below the words. On the sides a bracket is shown sticking out and on that is placed a turret. Above and behind, large blank walls, as of forts or palaces, are shown rising and on the top are turrets,which may be tall like minars or towers.

Sometimes behind one wall with turrets, there is another in a lighter colour, providing a sense of perspective and depth. Actually the thick black words are nearest, then the wall and turrets in deep colour and yet again the wall and turrets in light colour. The rest of the open space on either side in the composition may have yet another still lighter colour. So the scene seems to have a number of receding planes.

The architectural features that he uses, turrets and minarets and sometimes also arches and windows, reinforce the Oriental and infact Pakistani character of the calligraphy and make it perfectly distinctive.



"Qul huw-Allah-o-Ahad"



"Hayy-a-alal-falah"

"Labbaika-Allah-humma-Labaik"





Aslam Kamal

SHAFIQUE FAROOQI



Shafique Farooqi

Shafique Farooqi (b.1942; Sialkot) is a landscape artist and also a painterly calligrapher. He received art education at the National College of Art and Alhamra Art Council, Lahore 1965-72 and graduated from the Punjab University in 1978.

He does not practice classical calligraphy and has not been trained in this art but he has developed his own manner of painterly calligraphy which is very free and colourful. He fills the whole canvas with sweeping waves of many colours that wind and curve and undulate. Mingled in these waves are certain streaks that roughly take on the shape of words, like "Bismillah" and "Ar-Rafeh" and "Allah". In his typical work, the form of the words merges and mingles with the background colours as if the whole is one. In this churning pool of many colours, there are many swinging and swaying streaks and currents and some of them roughly suggest words. It is something like the multicoloured streaks on onyx or coloured marble in which some of the colourful streaks suggest faces or figures or words. Naturally, the forms of the word are freely turned and twisted to fit with the swinging and sweeping brush strokes or (more often) palette knife strokes which are laid on very thick.

In some cases, the words are more clearly formed and approximate to Naskh style. In yet other cases, the word is fully formed, like his canvas "Al-Musawwir" but in this the word is in one bottom corner and the rest of the canvas is just filled with a play of colour in the typical style of Shafique Farooqi. There is a multicoloured ground from which emerge some thick streaks of colour. In this case, Al-Musawwir has been written in light colours on an area of dark colours.

In other examples of his work, in which he uses his own freely devised version of the Kufi script, the words are in sharp outline and arranged neatly in a row. The prominently repeated vertical strokes also are perfectly parallel and are obviously made with geometrical instruments. This calligraphy is not in the general character of Shafique Farooqi but usually it fills only a small part of the canvas and the rest is again filled with his surging, sweeping waves of many colours.

He started taking part in group exhibitions in 1972 and held his first one-man show at the Alhamra Arts Council (Lahore) in 1975. After that he has put up numerous solo exhibitions in different cities of Pakistan and Europe.

SHAFIQUE FAROOQI

1942 Born at Sialkot
1963 Honours examination in Punjabi.
1978 B.A. Punjab University
1965-72 Art education, NCA and Alhamra
1965-72 Graphic artist in IER, Punjab University
1976-79 AV Aids Officer in Adm. Staff College, Lahore
1979-80 Same in Civil Services Academy, Lahore.
1990 Studied and taught in Turkey.

Ar-Rahman





BASHIR MOOJID



Bashir Moojid

Bashir Moojid of Lahore began as a poet in the pre-independence days, then turned to painting and finally to painterly calligraphy. He is a self-taught artist but has had the benefit of close contact with the leading artists and calligraphers of Lahore.

He has developed a quite distinct style of painterly calligraphy but his work is not well known because his natural modesty has kept him away from taking part in group exhibitions. Once a solo exhibition was planned to be held in 1984 but it never took place for some reason.

His work has not been published in newspapers or magazines except rarely. He has designed many book covers of Urdu literary works and the titles are calligraphed by him but these are not examples of painterly calligraphy. The beautiful brochure that was published on the occasion of his proposed exhibition contains excellent specimens—both in colour and in black and white but this has not been widely circulated.

He does not follow any of the traditional styles of calligraphy but designs his words himself freely, making the best use of the straight lines, arcs, loops and semicircles that make up the words. He makes the dots circular and big.

Allah



The few words in the Quranic phrases that he mostly calligraphs are sometimes written in a line but mostly one above the other. In both cases they are closely packed and to fit them together, he modifies the shape of the words.

In the given space, his words are fairly thick and heavy. What makes them all the more heavy and ponderous is the third-dimensional effect he creates by playing a light on the multicoloured words. This gives them a body and they stand out in the surrounding space like independent objects. The highlights are specially effective in this respect and make the words look like pieces of sculpture.

The words are given a body and seem to exist in space. When light and colour is played on them, they become what can be called really painterly calligraphy.

The colour scheme used on the words is repeated in the background which is made very colourful. Only the area just behind the words is made dark to set off the words but the rest of the background is painted lightly with patches of colour that run into each other.

The background and the words are so well harmonized that it seems as if the colourful clouds of the background have been turned by the wind into the shape of these words, just as many other strange shapes are created in the clouds.

Because Moojid is one of the very few masters of our traditional arabesque decoration (naqqashi), he has sometimes provided a very colourful decorative border to his painterly calligraphy. This he has done in the case of his finest creation so far, rendering the Quranic verse "Fa-bi-ayyi-aalaa-i-Rabbi-kuma-tukazzi-baan". This is a beautiful vertical composition in which words have been piled one on top of the other, in a conical form, as he often does. The arabesque border is itself a rare work of art and it is made all the more striking by the light that is made to play on it, just as on the words, so that parts of it are brighter than others. The varying luminosity increases the illusion of space and makes the whole work more tangible and real.

Many of the black and white calligraphies printed in his brochure have been provided with a background of arabesque decoration. The sinuous curves and symmetrical designs of the tendrils, leaves and flowers are rendered so beautifully with a very fine pen that one gazes absolutely amazed at the skill and labour and ingenuity of the artist.

Moojid seems to have a special gift for creating novel "tughras" which are words or phrases closely packed together into a design. The traditional "tughra" often found on coins, old and new, is in the shape of a sail boat, but there is no end to the new forms in which a "tughra" can be designed, and Moojid offers many beautiful examples. Some are in the form of mirror images, which was another traditional form of the "tughra" and it was called "to-am" or twin.

"Inn-Allah-a-Tawwab-ur-Rahim"



NEYAR EHSAN RASHID



Neyar Ehsan Rashid

Neyar acquired art education sporadically at the J.J. School of Art, Bombay, and later at the Chelsea School of Art, England. She became a portrait painter and painted many portraits of prominent personalities, the latest being one of the Queen of Jordan.

She became interested in calligraphy by chance. While living in the USA during 1984-85, she began to give elementary lessons in Islam to young Muslim boys and girls whose parents were unable to teach their children the faith of their forefathers. To enliven the lessons, she used a blackboard on which she wrote the names of Allah in large size.

That gave Neyar an idea. Why not paint the commonly mentioned ninetynine names of Allah and print them in the form of a handy book, like an album? On one page would be printed one name and on the opposite page relevant extracts from the Quran and the Hadith, with a brief explanation. That could serve as the first attractive introduction to the study of Islam for a young boy or girl living in a foreign land.

Being a very devout person, Neyar undertook this work as a religious mission and put her heart and soul into it. Often she claims thal she received hints and guidance in her dreams for the painting of the names.

After four or five years, she completed her project and an exhibition of these ninetynine paintings plus one large painting of "Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim" was held at Karachi and inaugurated by the President of Pakistan, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, on 10 December, 1989. The book could not be printed.

What has made the calligraphy doubly attractive is the spacious background left with each name and the extremely colourful way in which this background has been painted.

The size of the paintings is roughly the same, 31 x 25 inches but they have great variety because they are painted in many media. Some are done in acrylic paint, some in oil paint, some in water colour and still others in pen, with ink of many colours, even silver and gold ink.

Al-Salaam-0



NEYAR EHSAN RASHID

1934	*Born in Hyderabad, Deccan.*
1942	*Started learning calligraphy from Ustad Shamsher Ali.*
1947-48	*Studied briefly at J.J. School of Art, Bombay. Later learned portrait painting from Ustad Abdul Qayyum. Studied one year at Chelsea School of Art, London.*
1980	*Made portraits of Queen Noor and Princess Sarwat of Jordan*
1986-89	*Solo exhibitions of calligraphic paintings at Amman, then at Karachi.*



"Al Haqq-o"

There is nothing unusual or unorthodox in the calligraphy. All the names are written in the standard classical Naskh script but every calligrapher gives a slightly individual touch to the script. In Neyar's case, the thickness of the words in proportion to their sizc is less and so they have a slender look. The vertical strokes are elongated, even if this sometimes violates the traditional rules laid down for the Naskh script. For example, the Alif in Naskh is short (equal to five dots) and straight, while in Suls it is long (equal to ten dots) and with a triangular top, made by a very short upward stroke made before beginning the long downward stroke of this vertical letter. Neyar often makes her Alif as in Suls. Then, to make the terminal letter Noon, she makes a downward sweeping diagonal stroke that curves up in the end (as in Diwani and as sometimes in Suls). Then she makes the Meem round, when it occurs in the middle of a word while it is usually a square dot. The dots also are round rather than square, as is usual. These minor modifications and stylistic mannerisms give a refined, elegant and feminine character to her calligraphy.

Much labour is spent on the background which serves to make these calligrapllic paintings so colourful. If it is a blue background, it will have variations of tone from blue to green and even purple. If it is a yellow background, the hues will change from brown to red. Waves of the sea appear in some and colourful clouds in others.

Sometimes she even introduces a large plant and flower into the background but this is only in the case of those done in water colour. as in the case of her painting of Al Haiyee .

Those done in acrylic have the words embossed because the paint has been thickly laid on. They have a moulded and sculptured look while the background helps to set them off as real objects existing in space. The words are either in very light luminous colours against a dark background or in dark colours against a light background. Sometimes the words are covered with real gold and silver for which Neyar has a special technique.

When the background is made with thick acrylic paint, she gives it a wrinkled effect as in crepe silk or crepe paper but with the ridges even more prominent. These wrinkles or ridges spread on the canvas like so many streams, curling, swinging and meandering, so as to create movement and even commotion, against which the words stand still and stable and perfectly poised.

In some of the paintings, the background of the name is profusely illuminated and decorated with arabesque designs, as in the opening pages of some old manuscripts. This is done with pen and coloured ink on paper. An example of this is her rendering of the attributive name Al Suboor. This name is written in pure gold and for this Neyar had to rediscover the lost technique of the old Muslim calligraphers who wrote special manuscripts of the Quran in gold. With hints gathered from here and there and with a lot of trial and error, she was able to perfect a technique of writing in gold, which of course remains untarnished for ever.

Words of a Quranic prayer: "Wa'afu anna (and forgive us).



A few of her calligraphic paintings are in oil but these do not have any embossed effect on the words or those crinkly ridges because if oil paint is laid on too thick, it takes days to dry and progress from stage to stage becomes very slow.

In writing the names of God, Neyar can be called a painterly calligrapher only because the background is painted so colourfully while the actual writing has no special innovation or creative originality. Quite different is the case of the ninetynine names or appellations of the Holy Prophet which she has written and painted. In these the background is almost plain, though painted, but the words have been very ingeniously and even fancifully designed. They are wholly made up of ribbons that float in curves and loops and festoons, tapering off and again thickening, as if the ribbons are seen sometimes sideways and sometimes full face. The loops and curves of the ribbons are supposed to indicate the word and sometimes this is quite far-fetched, like a conceit in poetry. Even the lotus is used in some paintings to stand for a letter, though it hardly makes for legibility. Anyway, it is an achievement to render the ninetynine names of the Prophet in a wholly new style and perhaps no one else had done it before.

Ibn-e-Kaleem



Ibn-e-Kaleem

Mohammed Iqbal Khan Ahsan Nizami, better known as **Ibn-e-Kaleem** (b. 1946, Multan) because his father's name was Mohammed Hasan Khan Kaleem Raqam, is descended from many generations of master calligraphists. With this advantage and with dedicated hard work, he acquired mastery over all the seven traditional scripts. (According to him, these are Kufic, Diwani, Riqa'a, Naskh, Nastaliq, Suls and Ta'alique). Then, in 1976, at the young age of 30, he invented a new style which he called Khat-e-Ra'ana. This he has done by combining some of the features of Naskh, Nastaliq and Suls but the result is something new. Some leading artists have devised new styles of painterly calligraphy but they cannot be considered fully developed styles in the sense of the classical styles because exact and precise rules have not been laid down for the formation of each letter and for combinations of letters. Ibn-e-Kaleem is the only person who has fully worked out the rules of his new style of writing in the same way as the old masters did for the great classical styles in vogue today.

Besides Khat-e-Ra'ana, he has also drawn up the tables of the alphabet, called Takhti (correctly Taqtee') of the following six scripts: Kufi, Riqa'a, Diwani, Nastaliq, Naskh and Suls.

Beside this, he has written scores of Tughras (words knitted together into a design) in various scripts and also in his own new script, Khat-e-Ra'ana.

In many of these he has taken considerable liberties with the standard script to create a harmonious design and has painted the whole work in attractive colours. For example, he has written the word Muhammad eight times in a circle so as to make a flower. Then,

Qul-huw-Allah-o-Ahad ....



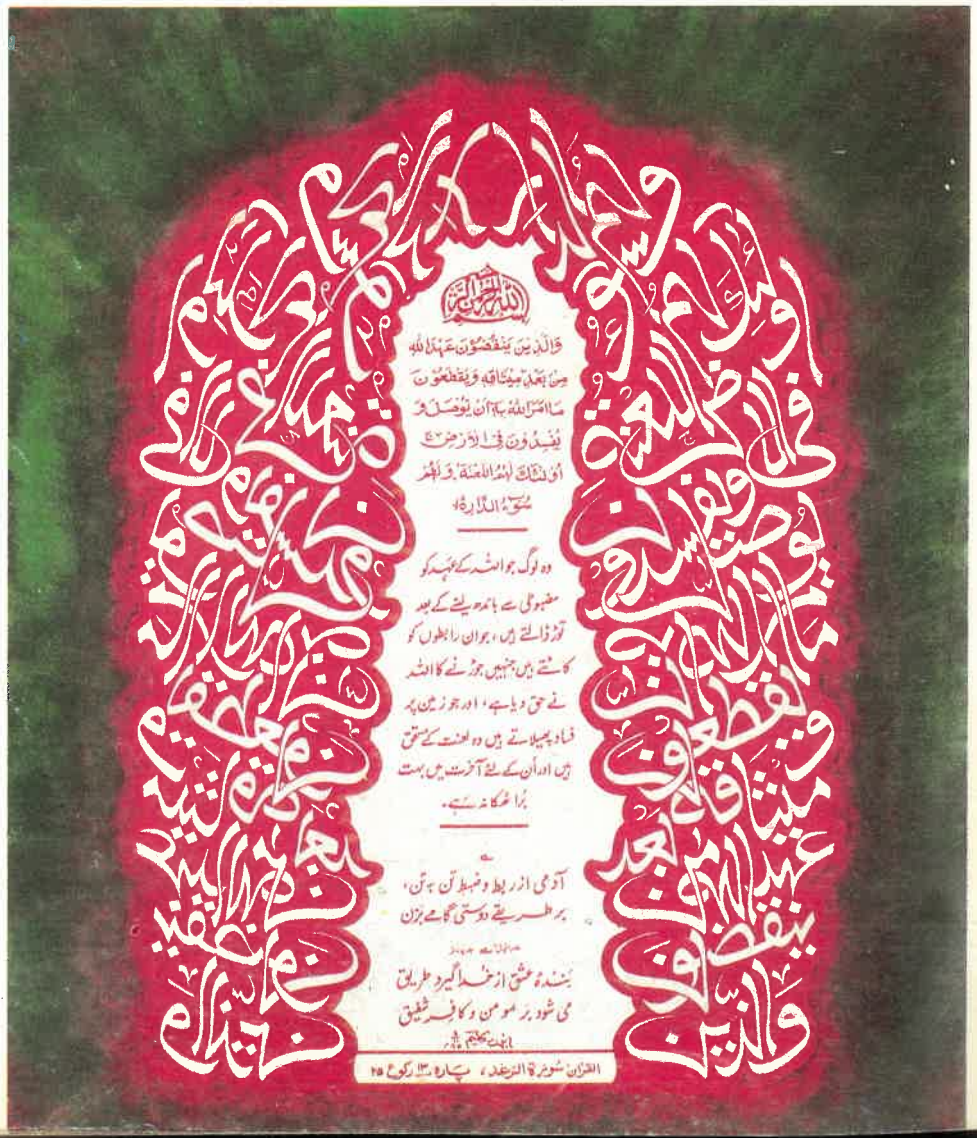
IBN-E-KALEEM

1946 *Born at Multan. Learned calligraphy from his father, Mohammed Hasan Khan "Kaleem Raqam". Invented a new style of calligraphy in 1976 called "Khat-e-Ra'ana". Has written and published ten books on calligraphy in Urdu, last one being "Muraqqa-e-Ra'anai", 1992.*

he has written the Quranic verse "Wallah-o-khair-ur-raziqeen". In this "Wallah" has been written very large and within the circle of the "hay", he has written the rest of the verse, making a very striking design. The background has been made with small patches of colour. "Wallah" also is coloured but the rest of the verse is left white, to contrast with the background. In one tughra, he has written "W'amalu Salehan" in such a way that the vertical shafts are made in the shape of masts of a boat and behind the words the silhouette of a boat has been shown. The whole picture has been suitably painted.

In short, scores of most ingenious and novel designs have been created by Ibn-e-Kaleem and presented in the form of paintings. He is different from the other painterly calligraphers because he does not stray too far from the standard script while the others indulge in all kinds of highly fanciful modifications of the forms of words. If they can get the credit of creating artistic and painterly calligraphy merely because they are abandoning the traditional forms and creating something new, even if this something new is not according to a plan and a system, then Ibn-e-Kaleem deserves more to be considered an artistic and painterly calligrapher because he has created most ingenious and novel designs in a style that is thoroughly planned and systematic. He takes enough liberties with the standard scripts and he renders some of his art work in colour and thus qualifies as a painterly calligrapher. His inventiveness is endless and his output is enormous and his sense of design is impeccable. Thus, he is one of our masters of classical calligraphy who is also a leading painterly calligrapher.

"Wallazeena yunqizoona ahd-Allah ... (Surat-ul-Ra'ad) (mirror image on left)



Gulgee



Gulgee

Gulgee (b. 1926) made his name in the 50s as a portrait painter. In the 60s, he also began to paint abstract compositions in the American style called Action Painting.

He had nothing to do with Islamic calligraphy but it so happened that in 1969 he was commissioned to design a round copper shield of six feet diameter to adorn the stall of Pakistan's Export Promotion Bureau in Expo '70 at Tokyo. Along the rim were forty round designs showing in symbolic form the various exports of Pakistan and in the centre were calligraphic inscriptions in the form of a round medallion.

In the same year he designed a huge round bronze emblem for the Muslim Foreign Ministers' Conference that was held at Karachi in 1969.

It was in 1973 that he began using calligraphy in his paintings. In that year, he was commissioned to paint a mural for the King Faisal Hospital in Riyadh on the subject of Muslim unity. After doing this, he produced another calligraphic painting on the same subject for the Islamic Summit that was held at Lahore in 1974. This painting now hangs in his home at Karachi. It is full of multicoloured dots and daubs of colour, in which even gold and silver have been used. Against this background has been calligraphed a famous verse of the Quran exhorting the Muslims "to hold fast to the rope of God and not to disunite". These words sweep in an arc from the bottom right to the top left corner. The style of writing is roughly in the Naskh script rather freely rendered.



"Wa'a tasimu bi-hablil-Allah-a ...
(Sura Aal-e-Imraan)

There is yet another mural in the King Faisal Hospital which is largely made up of Quranic verses on the subject of healing. This calligraphy is executed in silver and gold and at the centre of the design is a picture of the holy Black Stone of the Ka'aba at Mecca.

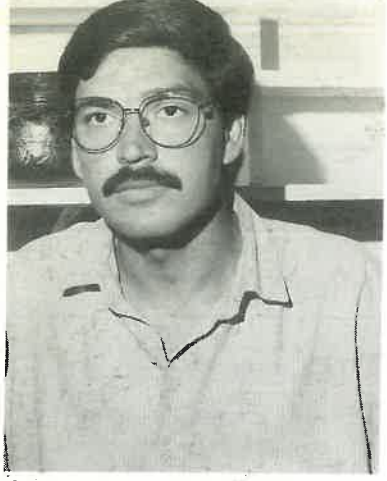
Much more profuse use was made of calligraphy by Gulgee when he was commissioned in 1975 to build a gigantic monument at Clifton in Karachi. He created some sort of an abstract sculpture with pieces of a broken aircraft. On the metal surface he wrote Quranic verses in silver and gold.

It is in his calligraphic paintings that Gulgee is in his element. As mentioned above, he had been practising Action Painting since 1960. Impulsive gestures and whiplash strokes of the brush are used in this style. There is a calligraphic quality in these linear notations. Gulgee hit upon the idea of rendering the Arabic words of the Quranic verses in this style and succeeded remarkably. Retaining the same freedom and force, he is able to indicate the cursive forms of the Arabic words, no doubt roughly but quite legibly. Because he laces his extra-big brushes with paint of many colours, the calligraphy becomes a very colourful creation.

He never writes in a straight line in his paintings but rather spreads the words on the canvas in shooting arcs and parabolas that make an attractive layout.

He has painted many huge calligraphic paintings in which Quranic verses have been rendered in the most painterly and attractive and yet correct manner. He has acquired such command over the standard Naskh style, in which Quranic verses are commonly written, that he can write big bold words correctly and beautifully with a thick marker while blindfolded. In his paintings, he takes liberties with the forms of the words without mutilating them and rendering them illegible.

Mention may be made here of another innovation he has made in the field of calligraphy by creating free standing sculpture of words from the Quran. He uses a half inch thick and about eight inch broad copper strip and rolls it in such a way that the half inch thick end of the strip forms the words, on both sides. Thus the words have a depth of eight inches, besides having length and breadth. In this way he has rendered the popular chapter of the Quran called Surat-ar-Rahman. The recurring refrain has been moulded by folding the copper strip according to the form of the words and then making all this into a roll which rests on the ground. The words can be read from both ends or edges of the copper strip. (See page 143 for more examples of calligraphy.)



Shakil Ismail

Shakil Ismail

Shakil Ismail (b. 1961) obtained his Diploma in Fine Art in 1983 from the Central Institute of Art, Karachi, but already in these twelve years he has produced an enormous amount of calligraphic paintings. He participated in a number of group exhibitions and won the First Prize for Calligraphy in the Sindh Artists' Exhibition at Karachi in 1986. In the same year, he held his first one-man show. His second followed in 1987, the third in January, 1988, the fourth in August, 1988 (all at Karachi) and the fifth at Islamabad in 1989. In 1990, he came up with his sixth solo exhibition which was quite different and absolutely new because instead of painting the words in oil on canvas, he had etched out the words with acids and other chemicals on antique vases, pots and utensils of copper and brass. Since then, he has been etching calligraphy on metal tablets.

Although so young, he was daring enough to undertake the big project of painting the ninetynine names of God. These were displayed in his solo exhibition of 1987. Each canvas was different in style and in size. In some cases the name was rendered as a purely abstract design. In others, the usual Naskh script was used but with certain modifications, magnifications and transformations that the artist thought fit to make in the interest of novelty of design. Both the word and the background were richly painted The immense variety of the designs which were created to render the ninetynine names was proof of the skill and ingenuity of the artist.

This won the 2nd Prize for calligraphy in the National Art Exhibition, 1994.



The most striking and unusual painting in the exhibition was a 30 x 5 feet canvas in which the whole chapter of the Quran called Sura-tul-Aadiyat was painted. In this Sura or chapter repeated mention is made of horses, charging and panting and raising dust and striking sparks with their hooves and penetrating the ranks of the enemy.

The artist formed the words in the shape of horses and in this way wrote all the verses of the Sura as so many galloping, rearing and prancing horses. To write even one verse in the form of a horse would have taxed the skill and inventiveness of any artist but to write the whole Sura in this way was really a remarkable feat. In his usual way, Shakil Ismail gifted the huge canvas to the Karachi University where it hangs now.

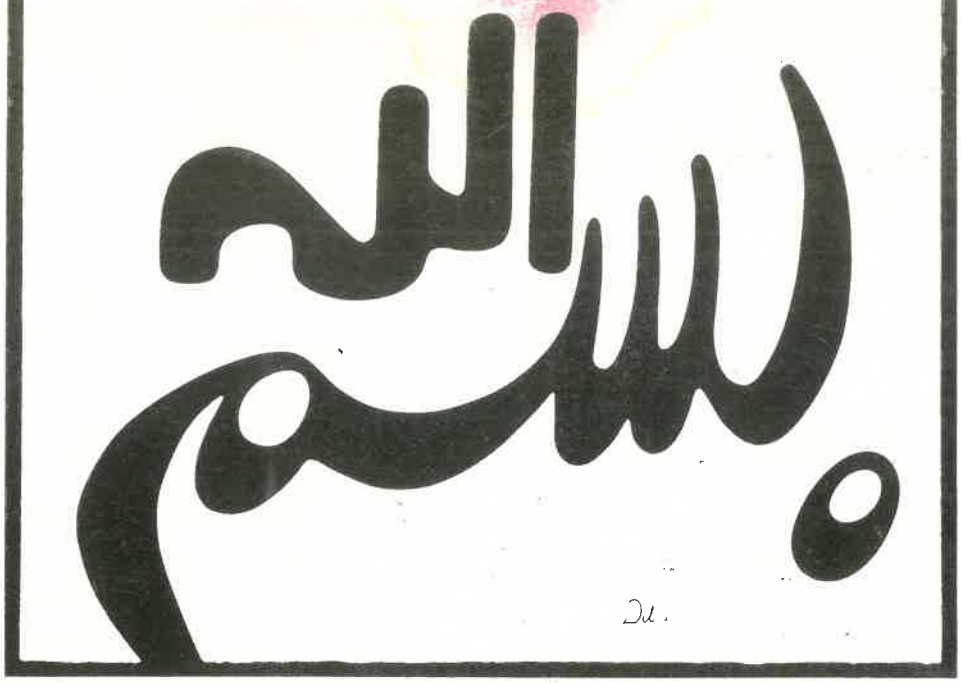
Another very beautiful painting was an 8 x 2 feet canvas on which the noble verses of the Ayat-ul-Kursi were written in two lines of very elegant Naskh. What made it doubly attractive was the fact that it was made to look as if it was a panel of glazed blue tiles on which inscriptions are often written on our old historical monuments.

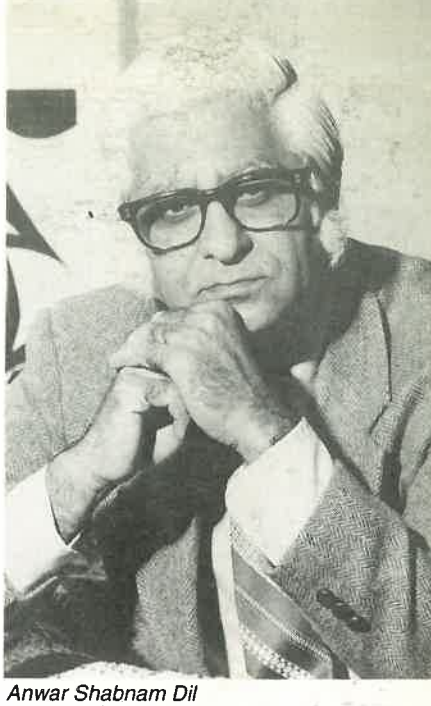
Eager as he always is to attempt something new, Shakil Ismail put up calligraphic paintings in his August, 1988, exhibition in which the words seemed to float in space, some near, some far, some above, some below, like real objects. This introduction of space and perspective into calligraphic painting was a daring innovation which called for more subtle colour handling also. For these floating and flying forms of words, he rightly chose the highly cursive Diwani script, modified and moulded according to the demands ol thc design.

"Fa-bi-ayyi-aalaa-i-bikuma tukazzibaan". (Surat-ur-Rahman) (The same written variously)









Anwar Shabnam Dil

Anwar Shabnam Dil

Anwar Dil's calligraphy is less known in Pakistan than in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and the United States. He is a Professor of Linguistics in the United States International University, San Diego, California. In Pakistan, his first exhibition of creative calligraphy was held in January, 1986, at Karachi and was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo.

Since childhood, he has been fascinated by the sound and form of the word. As a professor of language science, he has explored the nature and function of human language, notably in the spoken dimension. As an artist, he has tried to use the lines, forms and patterns of the word to capture the beauty, wonder and mystery that lies at the heart of things and also to body forth the adoration of a worshipful soul that contemplates them. Though his work is eclectic and he draws upon the riches of many civilizations to create meaningful compositions, most of his work emblazons the "Beautiful Names of God" (Asma-ul-Husna) and the names of the noble personages that adorn the annals of lslam, above all that of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

In his calligraphies, Dil uses only black and white to express the joy and ecstasy of his vision. But the white combines all the colours and the black contains many mysteries. Playing one against the other, the void and the solid, the negative and the positive, ne creates calligraphic compositions that are both spirit and matter, symbol and solid reality. As with the artist, their creation is an act of devotion, so for the viewer their contemplation is an exalting experience.

Ali





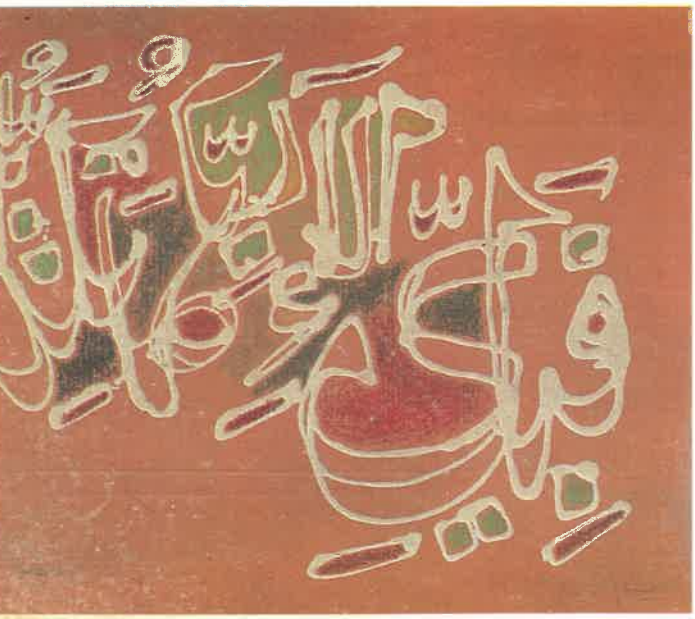
Sardar Mohammad

Sardar Mohammad

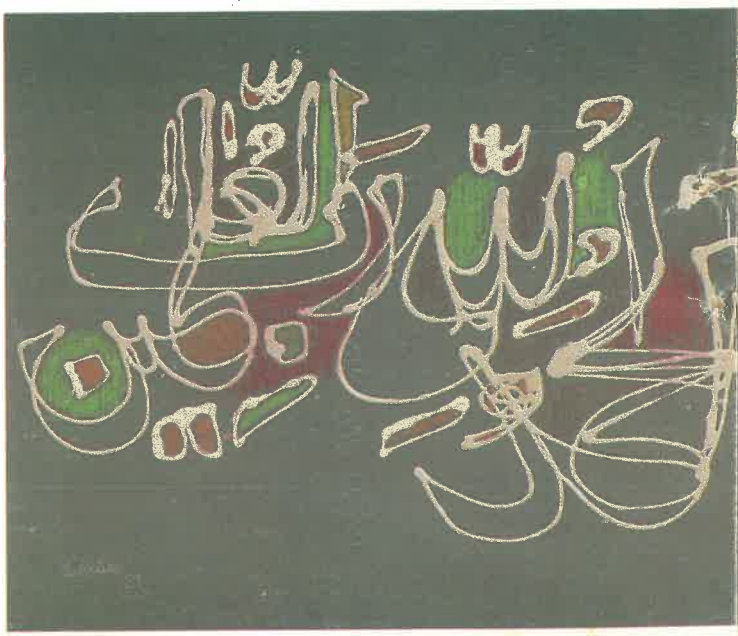
Sardar Mohammad (b. 1918) is one of our elder artists. Although active as a painter since the 40s, he started calligraphy only in 1980. Drawing upon some guidance in calligraphy that he had received from Master Ata Mohammad during his education in the Mayo School of Art (1934-37), he developed an unorthodox style of his own. When he entered his work in the National Art Exhibition of 1980, he was awarded the 2nd Prize for Painterly Calligraphy. In August, 1981, he put up a solo exhibition of forty calligraphic paintings in the National Museum of Karachi.

His calligraphy is like a free sketch in which the lines have been roughly and repeatedly drawn with spontaneity. He usually calligraphs single words, like Allah, Muhammed and Ali or small phrases from the Quran like Bismillah, Subhan-Allah, Huwal-Ghafoor-ar-Rahim and so on. Instead of drawing the exact outline of these words, he doodles roughly around their contours with a brush that is dripping with liquid oil paint made sticky by mixing varnish. The dripping and drooling line of sticky paint is dragged over the outline of the words again and again creating a web of lines from which the form of the words emerges as a multiple image. Naturally, the medium of the trailing line of sticky paint is such that it cannot be perfectly controlled and so the curves and arcs and loops move waveringly and falteringly and shakily but they do render the form of the words roughly. The swinging lines and the tangled skein has all the charm of a rough sketch as even doodling done by an adept draughtsman has its own appeal. In fact, the exact words often get lost in the tangled web of lines and the abstract linear design absorbs the attention by itself. The words, thus, are no more than a motif around which a pattern of lines is woven. It is not the calligraphy that remains important in this work but rather the artistry of the drunkenly reeling, swaying and swinging lines. Obviously, Sardar's command of calligraphy is just enough but he has hit upon an interesting and attractive way of playing around with the calligraphic forms to make linear compositions of great charm.

"Fa-bi-ayyi-aalaa-i-rabikuma tukazzibaan".



"Al-hamd-o-lil-Allah-i-Rab-il-aalameen".



Peshawar-based Painters



S. S. Hyder

Two great art movements have arisen in Pakistan in historical times: Gandhara painting, sculpture and architecture from the 1st to the 7th century A. D. and Mughal miniature painting from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The former which lasted much longer and whose output was much greater flourished in the Vale of Peshawar and a large surrounding area.

The mystery why this region, which was once the cradle of the arts became barren of art for 13 centuries is explained by the fact that a different people now inhabits this area, the very people who came like a deluge in A.D.460 and destroyed all the arts of peace and civilized life. They were the White Huns or Ephtalites, called Haital in old Arabic and Persian histories and whose name is still carried by one section of the Pushtoons called the Abdals. They made their home initially in the Suleiman Hills, from the Kurram River in the north to the Gomal in the south. This region is called Pusht and this was the original home of the Pushtoon, from where they spread all over the northwest.

After the lapse of a dozen centuries, art was revived in the Frontier when the Abasin Art Council was set up in 1955 by Musarrat Husain Zuberi (then Commissioner of Peshawar) and by the famous poet Khatir Ghaznavi. It promoted not only painting but drama, music and dance. The most famous artist of Peshawar of those days was M.M . Sharif, who designed the monogram of the Abasin Art Council. He had originally come from Gujranwala but settled in Peshawar. He was mainly a calligrapher but also an artist in other fields.

Around 1940 another talented man came to Peshawar from Quetta and put life into the art movement. He was S. S. Hyder. He found an eager patron in Yusuf Lodhi who owned a press and a daily paper called "Shahbaz" . Hyder was asked to make cartoons for the paper during the war days . After the 1965 Pakistan-India war, Lodhi asked him to make paintings of the war, which now adorn many of the army messes around Peshawar. In 1977 the Peshawar University requested him to make a number of 4 x 8 foot paintings of the visit of Quaid-e-Azam to the Frontier. Only three were completed when the strain proved too much for him. He left for Quetta and died there in 1977.

It was he who began art education in Peshawar by starting arts classes at Abasin Art Council in 1955 and continued till his death in 1977. In 1979, Arbáb Mohammed Sardar took over. Many of the senior artists of Peshawar got their art education from here, as the Fine Arts Department of the Peshawar University was started only in September 1964.

Much water has flowed down the Kabul River since then. When the Pakistan National Council of the Arts organized an exhibition of paintings of artists of the N.W.F.P., in 1992, the work of 28 artists was displayed. The Fine Arts Department of the Peshawar University is making good progress under the leadership of the Chairperson Tayyeba Ahmad. It has become so popular that 110 students are studying here for the B.F.A. degree. Besides the Abasin Arts Council and the Fine Arts Department of the University, there is the third institution, the Tasneem Art Gallery, which is playing an important role in promoting art in the Frontier. The owner-director of the Gallery, Tasneem Shahzad, is himself a fine graphic artist and his woodcuts and etchings are widely admired.

Arbab Mohammad Sardar



Arbab Mohammad Sardar

The first noteworthy product of the Abasin Art Council, the senior-most and the most prolific is Arbab Mohammad Sardar. Born in 1945 in Landhi Arbab near Peshawar, he first obtained a B.Sc. degree in agriculture from Peshawar University and then turned to the Abasin Art Council for art education in 1955. Later he went to Carrara (Italy) and learned sculpture. From 1979, he conducted art classes in Abasin Art Council. He lives and works in his idyllic village home.

His first solo exhibition was held in 1962 and he gained prominence from his many protraits of Iqbal and 20 paintings of the Pakistan-India war of 1965. The President of Pakistan opened his solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Islamabad, in April, 1978.

His whole work, painting and sculpture, is a celebration and glorification of the life of the Frontier. He revels in depicting men and women, young and old in his numerous portrait and figure paintings and sculptures. Perhaps his stay in Italy instilled the love of the old masters in him and the formalism of the Caracci family of painters. He presents the subject very objectively and the rendering is rather heavy-handed. His faces and figures emerge out of dark backgrounds and are often heavily shaded.

There is more freedom and flair in his landscapes and the colours too are more fresh. In his landscapes we see the village in the distance with its mud watchtowers. He also paints the open country with its bare rocks and austere, almost formidable look. He keeps the horizon low and paints the sky and clouds with more freedom than the rest of the picture. The most impressive are the views of the rugged defiles that provide a deterring and challenging obstacle to the approaching outsider.

ARBAB MOHAMMAD SARDAR

1945	*Born at Landhi Arbab, Peshawar*
1960	*Started learning at Abasin Art Council*
1969	*Won Ist Prize at exhibition of NWFP artists held by Abasin Art Council.*
1975	*Studied sculpture and painting at Carrara, Italy (home town of Michelangelo).*
1994	*Received President's Award for Pride of Performance.*

Scene from Murree



Girl from Kalash Valley



Nasim Rauf Cheema

Nasim Cheema too is among the pioneers of art in Peshawar. She studied painting in the Abasin Arts Council and her natural talent helped her to strike out a path for herself. She started exhibiting her work from 1973 onwards and gained recognition when she was awarded the 2nd Prize for Painting in the 1980 Annual S. S. Hyder Award Exhibition.

She seems to be specially attracted to the subject of flowers and has produced much work in this genre. She also paints landscapes, often showing farmers at work in the distance. She has selected her own little area of work, like the "square inch of ivory" that Jane Austen claimed for herself. She has an elegant, refined style, which combines fidelity to the subject with a certain degree of idealization. Her work has a placid and pleasant look and is something with which one could live, as they say.



Naseem Rauf Cheema

NASIM RAUF CHEEMA

1936	*Born at Nathiagali*
1965	*Joined art classes at Abasin Art Council.*
1975	*Won First Prize in Contemporary Arts Exhibition held at Peshawar.*
1980	*Won 2nd Prize in Painting at S.S. Hyder Award Exhibition, Peshawar.*



A Flower Study

Imtiaz Hussain

Imtiaz Hussain was born in 1942 and graduated in Fine Art from the National College of Art, Lahore in 1972 but he gained public recognition when he started exhibiting in the Annual S.S. Hyder Award Exhibitions at Peshawar. He got the 1st position and won the S.S. Hyder Award in 1983,1985,1986 and 1990.

By profession, he is a studio designer in the Pakistan Television Centre, Peshawar. His talent for this kind of work was put to good use in the relief panels and mural paintings he did for the Fortress Stadium, Lahore, and the Sports Complex Stadium, Islamabad.

His early paintings are characterized by a realistic approach, with people as the central theme. His later work, especially landscapes, shows an increasing sense of design and the tendency to cast the shapes of nature into moulds of the mind, but the transformation is not so radical as to be unrecognizeable. The cubical mud houses and watchtowers are easily amenable to abstraction, into geometrical or semi-geometrical compositions. But again. it should be pointed out that he does not take much liberties with nature

In an art exhibition of twentyeight Frontier artists held at Islamabad in 1991 by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, his painting of a rural scene with a cow shed was considered by the reviewer of the "Frontier Post" daily to "stand out among all the landscapes displayed" and to combine a traditional subject with a modern treatment.

A Frontier Village by Imtiaz Hussain





IMTIAZ HUSSAIN

1942	*Born*
1972	*Graduated from National College of Art, Lahore.*
1983, 1985 1986 & 1990	*Won First Prize at S.S. Hyder Annual Exhibitions.*
1994	*Has been working as Studio Designer in Pakistan Television Centre, Peshawar for ten years.*



Zahoor Ahmed

Zahoor Ahmed

Zahoor Ahmed (b. 1962) won recognition at the early age of eighteen, when he won the S.S. Hyder Award in the Annual Exhibition at Peshawar in 1980 for his sensitive painting "Blind Beggars." and then again, in 1985 he got the 2nd Prize for another painting. Although his art education is limited to the obtaining of a Diploma in Commercial Art from the Peshawar University (1980) he is a born artist who developed his talent very quickly. The secret of his excellence in painting is his skill in drawing.

Abbas Ali

Abbas Ali (b. 1958) got his initial education in the art classes of the Abasin Art Council under S.S. Hyder and later benefited by the Advanced Painting Course conducted by the eminent artist Mansur Rahi at Peshawar. From the latter he picked up his skill in water colour landscape painting, and that lightness of touch which only Bengali artists have. He holds B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees of Peshawar University.



Kutchi women and child by Zahoor

Jahanzeb Malik

Jahanzeb Malik (b. 1945) obtained a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Abasin Arts Council in 1966, when S.S. Hyder was teaching there and then completed the Advanced Painting Course under Mansur Rahi. By 1991, he had held three solo exhibitions, one of which was at Karachi. He has been regularly participating in the National Exhibitions organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

His entries in the 1984 exhibition showed clear signs of some new directions and one could see in his work the influence of Mansur Rahi who had come to teach in the Peshawar University in 1983. Though Jahanzeb never studied there, he benefited by the classes conducted by Rahi in the Abasin Arts Council in the evening. Rahi is well known for creating luminous atmospheric effects and dividing up the picture area Cubistically by crisscross lines. Jahanzeb too acquired some of these features and the solid shapes in his landscapes began to melt away in areas of multicoloured light, suffused in radiance.

His landscape entry to the 1987 exhibition "Da Mulazpul " or bridge, shows a delicate balance between the tangible bridge and trees and the intangible atmosphere, divided into luminous areas after the manner of Rahi. The landscape printed here shows a more firm grasp of the subject, apt division of areas, judicious placement of the central masses of mud houses and appropriate play of light to set off the main subject.

The landscape entered in the 1994 exhibition was rather similar except the broad foreground was divided Cubistically by crossing lines. The sky had less clearly marked pellucid areas of coloured light. There is no doubt that a very definite progress can be noticed in the work of Jahanzeb over the years.



Abbas Ali

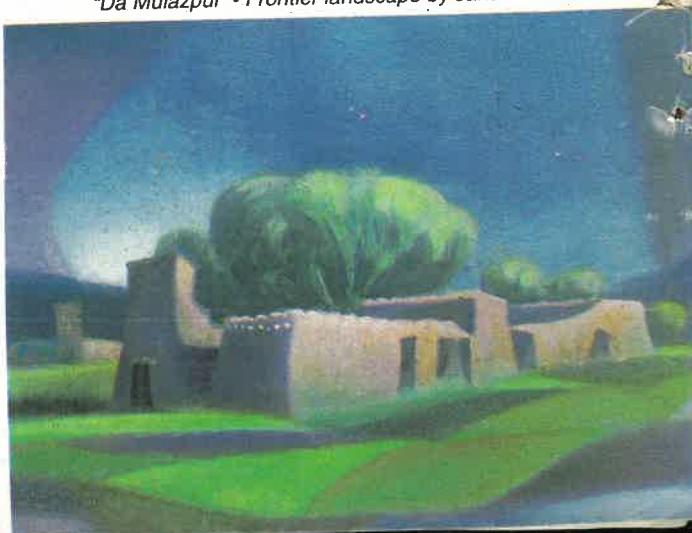


Landscape by Abbas Ali



Jahanzeb Malik

"Da Mulazpul" - Frontier landscape by Jahanzeb Malik



Tayyeba Ahmad



Tayyeba Ahmed

All these artists were from the Abasin Arts Council group, who entered the field much earlier. After the Fine Arts Department was set up in 1964 in the University, that produced another fertile group of new artists.

The University of Peshawar requested the Government of East Pakistan for the services of the eminent artist Zainul Abedin, Principal of the Government College of Art in Dacca. He came on deputation and worked in Peshawar University from September 1964 to February 1965. He set up the Fine Arts Department there and in December 1964, called one of his pupils, a fine artist and teacher of art, Rafiq Husain, to come from Dacca. Zainul Abedin left after a short stay and Rafiq Husain worked as Head of the Depa - rtment from 1965 to December 1976. His best student was Tayyeba Ahmed.

Tayyeba had a natural gift for water colour painting and began to win prizes for work in this medium as far back as 1970 and 1971 in exhibitions held at Peshawar. Born at Peshawar in 1951, she obtained a Diploma in Fine Arts from Peshawar University in 1972 and a Masters degree in 1986, winning first position in the first division. From 1974 she has been teaching in the Fine Arts Department in Peshawar University and in 1988 was made the Chairperson.

From 1972 she started winning awards for water colour at the annual exhibitions of the Abasin Art Council and in 1985 won the "Khyber Award" at the National Exhibition of 1985 held at Lahore. Though she won nine prizes from 1973 to 1990, she was still not sufficiently satisfied with her work to hold a solo exhibition, but did so in 1994.

She is primarily a landscape painter although she sometimes tries her hand at still life, Usually, but not always, she takes a fairly small section of the landscape and places a clump of tall pine trees in the middle, which are the centre of attention of the artist and the viewer. Part of the lower foliage is painted in some detail so that one can make out different branches but the bulk of the foliage is rendered as one mass, through free washes in which tones vary from light to dark and only chinks of white indicate that these are trees . She deftly and lightly paints in some features of the landscape that suggest the middle and the far distance. The hazy outlines of the distant hills have the ethereal quality of Chinese painting. This lightness of touch is found in all her work.

TAYYEBA AHMAD

1951	*Born at Peshawar*
1972	*Diploma in Fine Arts, Peshawar University.*
1973-74-75	*First Prize in Abasin Art Council Exhibitions*
1985	*"Khyber Award" at 5th National Exhibition at Lahore.*
1986	*First Prize in All-Pakistan S.S. Hyder Award Exhibition.*
1974-88	*Lecturer in Fine Arts, Peshawar University.*
1988 till now (1995)	*Chairperson of Fine Arts Department, Peshawar University.*
1994	*Won S. S. Hyder Award. Solo exhibition at Islamabad.*

Flourishing foliage



Autumn





Ghazala Misbah

Ghazala Misbah

The pool of talent in the Fine Arts Department of the Peshawar University includes Ghazala Misbah (b. 1949), who is teaching there since 1985. She too is a lady of many parts, having a Master's degree in Botany and an M.Phil. in Archaeology (with Islamic Architecture as her Major). Over and above all this, she earned a Master's degree in Fine Arts in 1983 and in the same year won the First Prize in the annual exhibition of the Punjab Fine Arts Department, from where she graduated. The winning painting was "Eggs and Basket" in which the subject has been very realistically and meticulously rendered in pen and ink and then painted lightly in pastel. It was a very good work for a student.

A much more elaborate work was her 3 x 4 foot tempera painting entitled "Nomads at Daily Chores". It shows a woodland scene in which the thick trunks of three trees in the foreground and the foliage above are painted in a decorative and wholly fanciful manner while in the background are visible many more tree trunks. In the open spaces are standing colourfully dressed shepherdesses and flocks of sheep behind them. A golden light pervades the whole scene and the nearest tree is bathed in sunset hues. It all looks like a set for a film or a stage play.

Very interesting are almost all her abstract paintings in which she has depicted the sea or clouds or lightning or whirling circles or half circles. They are all part of an exhibition of 70 paintings entitled "Reflections of Allah in Nature". This no doubt means reflection of the glory of Allah and not the word Allah.



arun Pakhtun" (Worthy Pathan) by Misbah

Amna Ismail

Another noteworthy artist who teaches in the Fine Arts Department of the Peshawar University is Amna Ismail (b. 1960). She holds not only a B.Sc. degree in Home Economics but a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Fine Art, obtaining first position in the first division in the latter examination in 1985. Since 1988 she is working as a Lecturer in the Fine Art Department at Peshawar. She is a versatile person and has distinguished herself in many fields besides art, such as sports, athletics, music and dramatics.

She loves to paint landscapes and her favorite medium is water colour. A lovely scene from Gilgit showing trees in golden-red autumn colours is reproduced here. It is an unusual composition in which trees, rocks and bushes are massed on one side while a deep valley spreads on the other side with dim blue mountains in the distance.

The other painting too has an uncommon subject, namely rugged cliffs overhanging a mountain stream which catches their reflection. The dark blues, browns and purples capture well the grandeur of the scene. The rendering is faithfully descriptive of the subject but does not lose the charm of water colour application and nowhere becomes hard.



Amna Ismail

Autumn in Gilgit



Cliffs overhanging Mountain Stream



Ghazala



Ghazala

Ghazala Sarfaraz, who is better known simply as Ghazala, made a name for herself as far back as 1983 when she painted the Afghan refugees in Pakistan in their camps. These 80 or 90 canvases were exhibited in art galleries all over Pakistan no doubt with government encouragement because General Ziaul Haq, then President of Pakistan, spoke highly of her initiative in this field as a means that would promote better understanding of the problems and the sufferings of the Afghan refugees. The paintings certainly showed that the artist had taken the trouble to closely study her subject and they provided excellent documentation. The broad views of the refugee camps are too generalized to have any significant specific study of special features. The trees in the background are mere smears of colour and the distant figures only small patches aptly placed. Studies of individual figures are more detailed and substantial but the long loose robes give little indication of the physique inside. The faces are undistinguished like a doll's.

Ghazala, who obtained a Diploma in Fine Arts from Peshawar University in 1979 and another from the Abasin Arts Council ,has made an important contribution to art in the Frontier. After having explored and exhausted the subject of the Afghan refugees, she turned her attention to old monuments and historical buildings - mosques, tombs, forts, artistically designed gateways, majestic domes and minarets of the region. She is sufficiently faithful to the subject and yet the paintings have a definite creative element contributed by the artist.

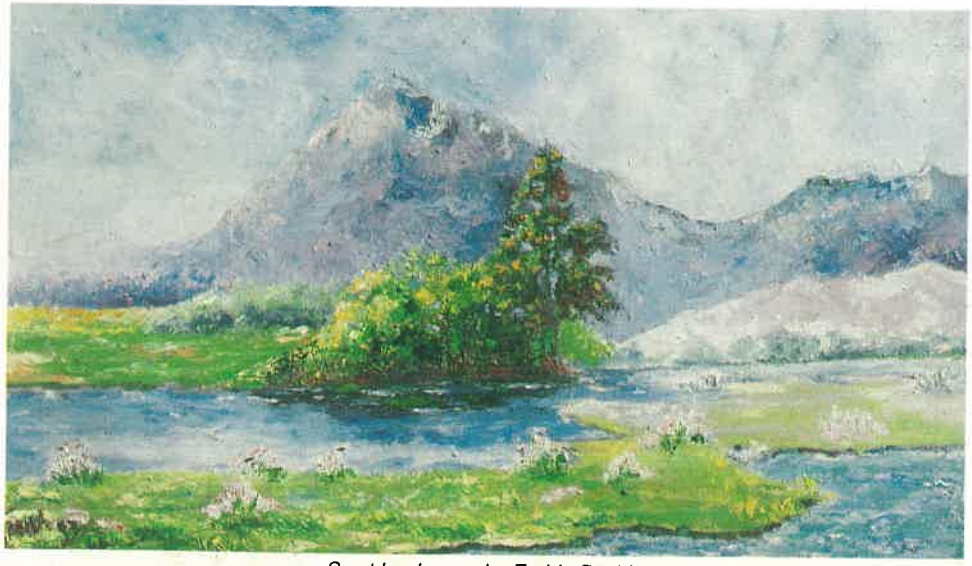
Then she has come up with yet another novel contribution in the form of works of art created on a personal computer.



A nomad Kutchi woman

Farida Bashir

Farida Bashir is another gifted artist working as Lecturer in the Fine Arts Department of the Peshawar University since 1991. Her talent was recognized when she won a prize recently at the annual exhibitions held by the Abasin Arts Council, Peshawar, named the S.S. Hyder Award Exhibitions. The excellent landscape of Swat by her, which is printed here, shows her command of tonal harmony and perspective as also rare ability in which play of colour and fidelity to the subject are noteworthy.



Swat landscape by Farida Bashir



Farida Bashir

Quetta-based Painters

Quetta was the site of an ancient culture. So, when the foundations were being dug to build the Serena Hotel in 1985, many beautiful artefacts were discovered, including two golden bulls made as brooches.

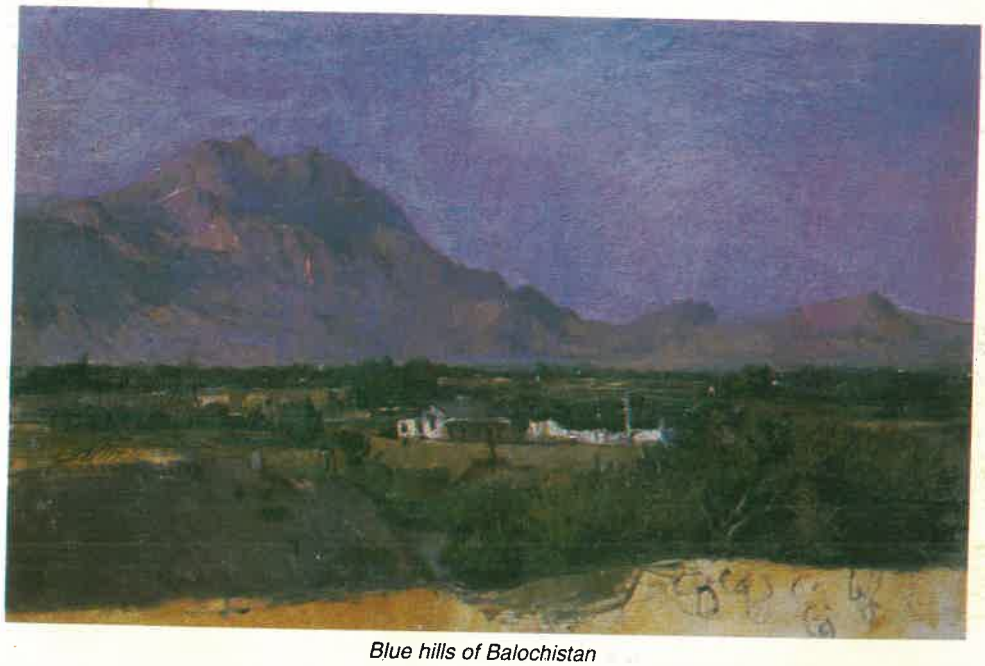
In more recent times, that is in the years immediately preceding independence, the popular form of art in Quetta, as also in Karachi was painting on glass. Zainuddin and his pupil A. Rahman and later, a newcomer from Bombay, Yaqub, used to paint pictures of popular heroes like King Amanullah, Enver Pasha and Kemal Ataturk, and also some landscapes occasionally. Yaqub, who was better than the others, was a calligrapher too. and painted verses from the Quran and the poems of Iqbal

The most gifted and the most popular artist of those days was Syed Aziz Jan who died in 1960 at the age of 80. Besides painting, he excelled in making small clay models of common scenes, such as people offering prayers or engaged in cock fighting. He was in much demand among the Hindus for making 30 foot high effigies of Rawan to burn on the occasion of their festival, Ram Leela.

His pupil was Aziz Jan (b.1937) who obtained a drawing master's diploma from Sindh University, Hyderabad. He was the first artist of Balochistan to hold an exhibition of his paintings in Quetta, as far back as 1962. He paints the landscape and also the life of the common people of Balochistan, like nomads standing outside their tent, in the painting which was displayed in the First Art Bienniale of Pakistan, 1987. Saeed Akhtar, the famous portrait painter of Lahore, also belongs to Quetta and used to take lessons from Aziz Jan before he went to the National College of Art for education.

The art movement gathered momentum when the Arts Council was founded at Quetta in 1972, with Ata Shad as the first Director. They started arts classes and Pir Mohammad Tareen was the first instructor. It was here that Jamal Shah, Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan obtained their initial training and later in 1979 joined the National College of Art, Lahore. The first obtained a diploma in sculpture and the latter two in painting, in 1983. The art classes were conducted from 1976 to 1978 by Shehr Bano, from 1978 to 1981 by Ghalib Baqar and from 1984 to date by Kaleem Khan. The Arts Council, renamed Idara Saqafat-e-Balochistan, shifted to a fine new building in December,1989, where not only are art classes held but art exhibitions also, in an art gallery which has been provided in the new building.

The University of Balochistan was established in 1970 and the Fine Arts Department was opened in 1984, the first proper art institution of the province. On the teaching staff were Jamal Shah, Faryal Gohar, Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan. In March, 1990, Abid Husain Qureshi came over from the Punjab University and joined the Department.



Blue hills of Balochistan

Kaleem Khan



Kaleem Khan

Kaleem Khan (b,1958) celebrates in his paintings the scenic background of Balochistan, the stony wildernesses as also the lush oases of greenery that emerge here and there. He loves to wander over the vast stony, scrubby, waterless country with its bleak hills and cloudless skies. Though he paints in water colour also, his best work is in oils. Some of his landscapes are panoramic and show the vastness of the country with blue hills in the distance and huge empty spaces in the foreground dotted with rocks and stones and sparse vegetation, and sometimes a flock of sheep or goats. In these the colours are low-keyed and brush strokes are not prominent. However, when he paints closeup scenes of trees and lush vegetation and small water courses and mud huts, his colours are richer and the brush work is more conspicuous which he applies in short diagonal strokes. His palette and whole style is markedly Impressionistic for his brushwork is free, play of light is emphasized and the palette is fresh and bright.Like the Impressionists, he is very fond of the typical combination of yellow in the lighted areas and mauve in the shadows.

He catches sensitively the peculiar pellucid light of the highlands of Balochistan which is markedly different from that of the dusty plains. Gorgeous is the scene in spring when the numerous varieties of fruit trees burst into bloom - almonds, apricots, plums and peaches. The flossy silken blossoms are like nature's confetti rained down to mark the festive spring season. In the painting below, Kaleem Khan has caught the play of light on the flowering fruit trees.

He is adept at portraiture too. His colours are in a low key and there is an engaging looseness about the application of paint and a certain fuzziness that makes for easy natural informality and warmth.

KALEEM KHAN

1958	*Born*
1983	*Graduated from National Arts College, Lahore.*
1984	*Started teaching in Fine Arts Department of Balochistan University.*

Fruit Trees in Bloom



Portrait of a Youth





Akram Dost Baluch

Akram Dost Baluch

Akram Dost Baluch (b. 1958) is in love with the rich craft tradition of his native Balochistan. His home is overflowing with his collection of local rugs. curtains, bags. cushions and other textile goods, woven, embroidered or block-printed as also carved stone and terracotta tiles from old graveyards and mosques.

He has painted Balochistan women wearing local costumes and set in indoor scenes with local furnishings. He also paints abstract compositions using some of these handicrafts as elements and also using their common motifs and colours, the dominant maroons and blacks.

It is not a question of fascination with certain colours and patterns only. Akram and all the other artists are in love with the land, the people, their way of life and their history. Akram has modelled a very impressive idealized bust of the great Baloch hero, Mir Chakar Khan (1468 - 1565).

But beyond all this, Akram, and all the other local artists, are deeply perturbed by the social problems faced by their people and they try to express their distress and dismay. Akram Dost has also painted a large mural with many panels in which he has tried to depict the diverse problems of life.

AKRAM DOST BALUCH

1958	*Born*
1983	*Graduated from N.C.A., Lahore, in painting.*
1984	*Started teaching in Balochistan University Fine Arts Department, as Lecturer.*
1986	*First solo exhibition (in Karachi).*

Terrorized



Balochi Fabrics



Aftab Ahmed Khan



Aftab Ahmed Khan

Aftab Ahmed Khan (b. 1943) came to notice when he had the honour to hold an exhibition jointly with Ahmed Parvez and Lubna Agha in 1971 at Karachi. Ahmed Parvez not only considered his work good enough to be exhibited together with his own but even wrote a highly complimentary note for the brochure of one of his later exhibitions.

Aftab must have continued to produce work of some quality to be able to get it exhibited in such prestigious galleries as the Indus at Karachi, (1972) the Contemporary Art Galleries, Rawalpindi, (1972). The Gallery, Karachi (1973), and again the Contemporary Art in 1974.

From the brochure of his 1990 solo show at the Danish Gallery, Karachi (which contains five colour reproductions) it seems that he was still caught up in the toils of abstract art and was trying to create richly colourful compositions like those of Parvez but without any linear forms, only colours running one into another.

It seems he realized at last that he was knocking his head against a wall and he could not create anything significant or exciting. The shadow of Parvez was lying too heavy on him and he had first to shake himself free.

He eventually did so and came up with something original, as deeply colourful as he always wanted it to be but based wholly on his personal vision. The springs of his inspiration gushed from somewhere deep down in his own soil.

It seems to me as if he had pored long over Persian, Mughal and Rajput manuscripts and albums. Then, drunk deep with their beauty, had fallen into a trance and created these visionary pictures in the idiom and technique of this day.

The imagery of Persian cypresses and flowering trees and carpet designs; the Mughal horsemen and architectural motifs; the turbaned and long-robed men and the ladies wearing Rajput bell-skirts, all crowd his imagination and found expression in these paintings.

The imagery is all of the old world but the hand is that of a painter of today, wielding a big brush and using oil paints on canvas. The symmetrical designs and arabesque motifs become askew and asymmetrical as a modern sensibility guides his hand.

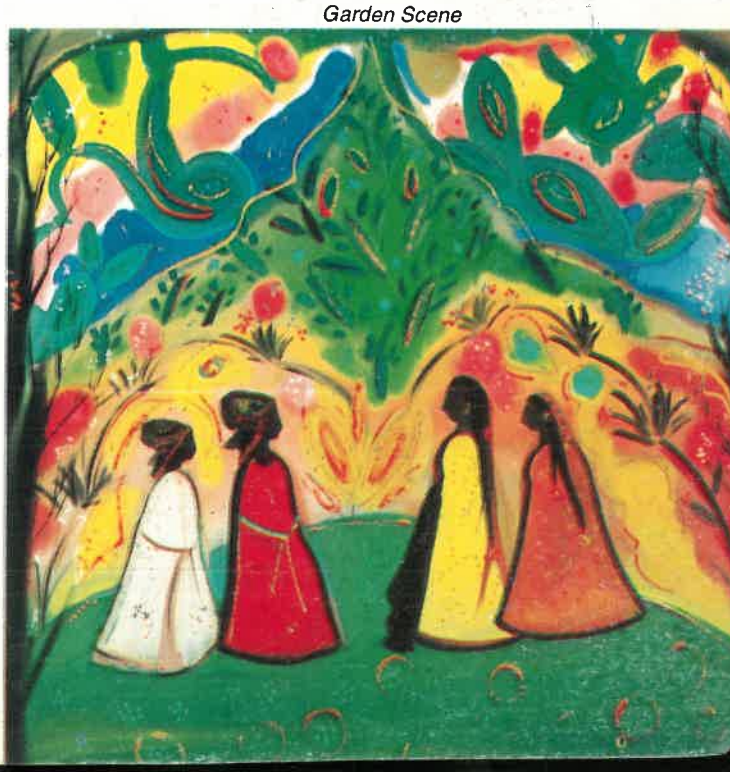
AFTAB AHMED KHAN

1956-61	*Learned painting from Sadequain*
1965	*First one-man show (at Karachi).*
1970	*Learned from Ahmed Parvez.*
1971	*Joint show with Ahmed Parvez and Lubna Agha.*
1974	*Painted two murals for Islamic Summit at Lahore.*
1994	*8th solo exhibition at V.M. Gallery, Karachi. Has been working for long with P.T.V. Quetta Centre.*

Princess with Peacocks



Garden Scene





Mussarrat Mirza

Mussarrat Mirza

Hyderabad-based Painter

Mussarrat Mirza's paintings are as deeply rooted in the soil of Sindh as the grey-green acacia trees that line its dusty roads.

She has travelled a long way from the early 60s when she obtained the M. F. A. degree from the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University. The Head of the Department was the eminent artist Anna Molka Ahmed and it was only natural that Mussarrat's early work was deeply influenced by her teacher. The same scenes of rural activity, peasants raising baskets full of threshed wheat and pouring them down to winnow it; hulking bullock carts lurching along on the uneven dirt roads, large full-length portraits of bearded patriarchs sitting on a chair, as painted by many of Mrs. Ahmed's students, were painted by her, all extremely realistic and matter of fact. As Mrs. Ahmed herself once observed, she taught her students tonal painting (that is, changing tone of a colour to show change of light on different sides of an object or person) but she herself used full colour for each facet, choosing the colours by their light value (like green for the shaded and orange for the lighted side).

By 1968, when she held her first solo in Karachi, she was already trying to break out of the mould in which her art education had cast her. She began to fit some of her rustic figures in Cubist patterns by picking out the lurking "cones, spheres and cylinders" which, Cezanne had taught, lie at the base of all natural forms. She did not follow this practice frequently but even till 1992 we find a large painting of a bullock cart seen from the side, and four peasant men and women and heaps of stones in the foreground, all enveloped in a mesh of triangles. squares, oblongs, cubes and the prominent circle of the cart's wheel.

It was not this however that established her identity but her almost featureless, atmospheric paintings that she exhibited in her 1969 exhibition at Karachi which she entitled "Dust and Desert". There was no trace of abstraction in these 40 paintings nor broken patches of colour. The whole emphasis was on catching the aura of the dusty desert country around Sukkur where she makes her home. The captions of some of the paintings are indicative of the artist's aim: "Dusty Day", "Dust Storm", "Lone Journey", "Song of the Desert" (showing a lonely young man singing under a lone bare tree in the desert), "Sunset in Sukkur", "The Moon on the Indus" and "Aha! The Rain" (showing a few children crying with joy to see rain clouds on the horizon).

Besides scenes of the desert, Mussarrat became famous for almost deserted scenes of Sukkur and other nearby villages, especially those seen from the roof top. She confided once that as a child, she was not allowed to go into the street and draw or paint, so she indulged in her artistic hobby sitting on her roof top. The mud houses, the dusty atmosphere and the near deserted lanes were painted by her with a few natural colours. browns and greens and blue-greens in subdued tones. But the sensitiveness with which she caught the play of the torrid sun on the parched mud walls and their rough texture was widely appreciated. In some the straight lines and angles of the cubical mud houses acquired a somewhat Cubist look but this was not overstressed. In fact, the edges were softened and the areas in light and shade were not sharply divided

Another noteworthy feature of her paintings was the loneliness and solitude and silence that seemed to envelop the scene. Gone were the days when she painted the melas or fairs of Sindh, with their merry crowds clad in colourful dresses, or the laden bullock carts and the small village gatherings. She veered more and more towards such subjects as empty staircases, deserted streets and abandoned old buildings where only dark windows gape in awe, petrified.

There is something soulful and mystical about these empty vast spaces in the desert that she paints. Her paintings "The Fragrance of Solitude", "The Wailing Wind", "The Day of Loneliness" are imbued with a wistful, meditative ambience that hints at deep moving experiences . She is a poet and a person with marked mystical leanings.

An important departure took place in 1985. As she says: " I was so tired of oils. Half finished paintings lined my walls and I was unable to work on them. I was overcome by a sense of solitariness. I needed some sort of a turning point, and I found it almost by accident when I started on water colour. There was an immediate chemistry between the medium and me."

In 1986 she held her first exhibition of water colours, thirty-six of them. They were all abstract compositions. Liberated from the world of appearances and of the tangible, she now works on her own imagined universe, the landscape of the soul, which has here and there suggestions of ground or sky but in a tangential way, if the viewer wishes to read this into the painting.

Her colours in these abstract paintings are bright for she says, dull colours can be used in oils but if they are used in water colour they become muddy and look dirty. She has liberated her palette and uses all the colours of the rainbow. Each painting is a melody in itself, whether it is a sunset or dark lowering clouds over what seems to be a thick forest. She called this series "A Melody of Landscapes".

This may have been a welcome break from her overworked soulful solitary scenes but her personality finds true projection in the same old dust-laden atmosphere of deserted village scenes or vast expanses of wasteland with a solitary tree or camel or person somewhere in this sea of silence. It has its own wistful air and a soothing charm, which can be sometimes uplifting and elevating. No wonder some of these latter paintings were selected when the P.N.C.A. put together the most important exhibition so far, to send to the USA in 1987. The same happened in 1994 when the Director of the Pacific-Asia Art Museum, Pasadena, California came to select paintings for a major exhibition of Pakistani art there.



Colourful Mists

A Quiet Lane in old Sukkur



Deserted Scene of Houses near Sukkur





Zainul Abedin

East Pakistan Painters (1947-71)

Zainul Abedin

Zainul Abedin (1914-1976) dominated the art scence of East Pakistan till he died. He graduated from the Government Institute of Art, Calcutta and taught there for a year. Then the partition of India took place and he came to Dacca, and taught for a while in the Dacca Normal School (for teachers). In 1948, the Government Institute of Art, Dacca was set up and he was appointed principal. (Dacca was spelled as Dhaka after 1971.)

As the Principal of the only art school of East Pakistan (another was not set up till 1974, in Chittagong) and as the President of the Dacca Art Group, he exercised much influence on the younger artists, and his name was synonymous with art in East Pakistan.

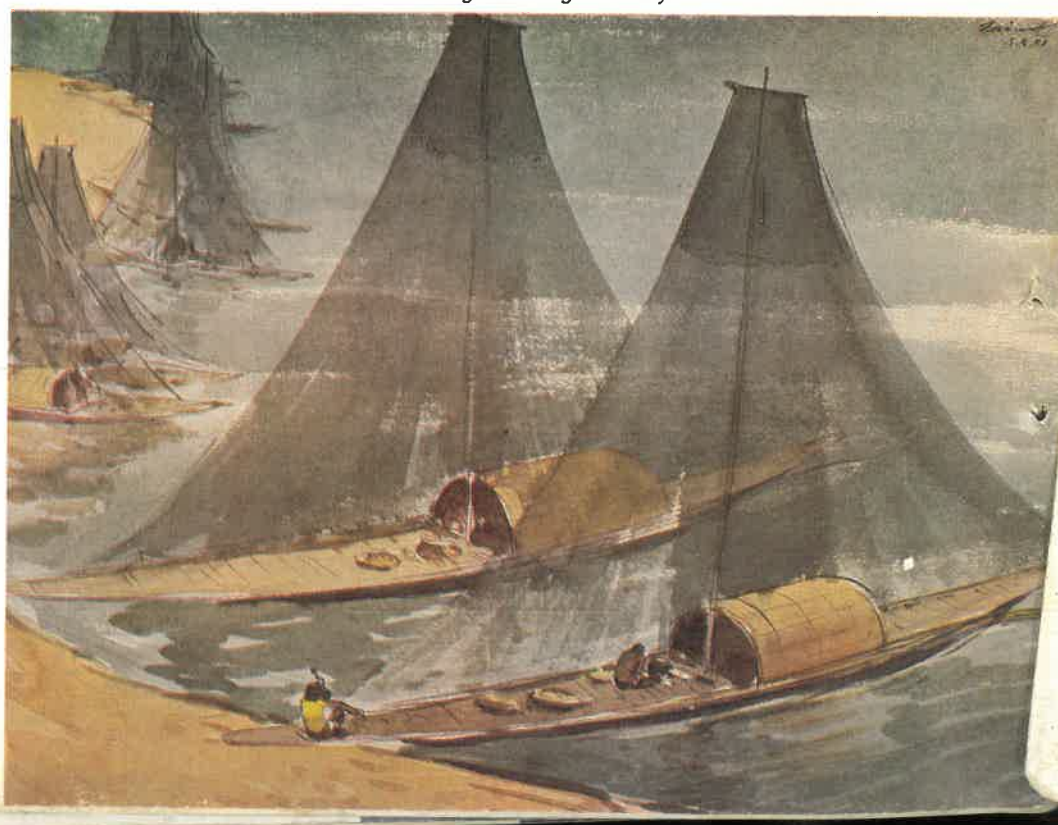
He won national and even international recognition when he made the starkly realistic. black dry brush sketches of the terrible Bengal famine of 1943. He depicted such ghastly scenes as a child vainly nursing at the breast of his dead emaciated mother, a picture which he entitled "Madonna 1943", with biting irony. With a touch of caricature style, he depicted the weird reality with the fewest possible measured strokes of the brush. Every sketch was like a cry from his heart and it deeply moved everyone who saw it. These 2,000 sketches that he turned out under deep emotional stress are undoubtedly his greatest achievement. He never found such a challenging subject nor was he ever so deeply moved again. In fact, from 1943 to 1951 when he went to London and held a solo exhibition of his work at the Berkeley Galleries in 1952, he did not produce much and was wholly taken up with teaching.

At this exhibition, he exhibited both some of his famine sketches and later work. The eminent critic Eric Newton commented admiringly on both. About the first he said:

"It is as though the Oriental hand, holding the brush in the traditional Oriental way, and using nothing but fluent black ink and water on absorbent paper, had been guided by a European eye."

About the second joyous and colourful pictures, he wrote: "Here the need for urgency has disappeared. There is no longer any need to force the pace of the brush. The water-borne vegetable market is a joyful, colourful sight, full of details bound together by

Fishing nets hung out to dry



the rhythmic sweep of the boats. Here the artist's faculty for composition is called into play. and here again, the East is fused with the West"

His subjects were all drawn form the happy serene life of the Bengal village – two boatmen pulling a boat, two cartmen pushing a bullock cart, two farmers sitting on a wooden frame being pulled by two bullocks to level the ploughed field, two fishing boats with their fishing nets hanging from the tall masts like two huge cones, women at the village tank filling their pitchers with water, a decorative frieze of the huge dark tribal Santhal women wearing red flowers in the buns of their hair, the huge funeral procession of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah as his cortege is being taken to the grave, and so on.

Except for some paintings, like the Santhal women, which are painted with decorative realism, and the Fishing Boats, which is slightly Impressionistic but with a limited colour range, the numerous pictures of women whether in oil or gouache or pen and water colour, are done in sketchy style using many of the conventions of Bengali folk painting for drawing the face and figure, hands and feet. Gone is the caricature type stark realism of the Bengal famine sketches. Its place is taken by exaggeration and stylization of the figure in the folk style and in the moulding of the image to create a rhythmic design. The linear approach is always prominent, not only in the outline but in the painted areas, which are often scratched to make lines in reverse.

Apart from his numerous sketch type paintings, he made also some fully finished paintings, like Two Snake Charmer Women, in which the two female figures have been greatly elongated. Their long curved necks, small heads on which are baskets full of snakes, look almost like snakes. The dark shadows behind and around them give them a sinister look.

Zainul Abedin was developing a style which combined the abstract values of modern art with the swinging rhythms of Bengali folk painting but he was too absorbed in his teaching work to produce much. After he resigned his Principalship in 1967 he did not live long enough to achieve his goal.

ZAINUL ABEDIN

1914 (Nov. 8)	*Born at Mymensingh, East Pakistan, now Bangladesh*
1938	*Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Calcutta.*
1942-43	*Made black ink brush sketches of Bengal famine.*
1948	*Helped to establish Government Institute of Art, Dacca and became its first Principal.*
1948-67	*Worked as Principal.*
1976	*Died.*

Bathing beauties at village tank



Aminul Islam



Aminul Islam

Aminul Islam (b. 1931) had much more influence on the younger artists than Hamidur Rahman because, unlike the latter, he was a teacher at the Government Institute of Arts and Crafts, Dacca, from 1956 when he completed his art education, to 1984, when he retired. In 1953 he obtained his diploma from the Art Institute of Dacca and during 1953-56 he studied art in Florence, specially learning the art of mosaic at the Scoula di Mosaico in Florence.

On return from Italy, he held his first one-man show at Dacca putting up work that he had done there during his three-year stay, and it was all realistic work. Even a large mosaic panel showing a reclining woman with a pigeon was largely realistic, although some curving lines of the figure were extended into the background, in the manner of the Cubists, to divide up the area and to make it a continuation of the figure. This mosaic was again displayed in Karachi at the First National Exhibition of Pakistan held in August 1957, and was awarded the second prize.

From 1958, however, he began to paint semi-realistically. A good realistically painted subject was used as the base and then the whole picture area was divided up into all kinds of geometrical shapes, like a jigsaw puzzle. The most striking picture of this period was "Young Riders" in which an accurate realistic study is made of two boys riding two horses. After making a fine realistic outline, the artist divides the picture with intersecting lines in a Cubist way. The form with intersecting lines is here done in such a way that the division into areas coincides with the varying areas of light and shade and with the gradually turning planes of the solid form.

Aminul Islam began with realistic painting. Then he achieved a marriage of realistic and abstract styles. In the next stage, he began to drop out the subject from his paintings, sometimes retaining suggestions of the subject, as in his "Procession", but by and large,

AMINUL ISLAM

1931	*Born at Dacca.*
1953	*Diploma from Government Institute of Art.*
1953-56	*Studied at Accademia della Belle Arti, Florence and Scoula di Mosaico.*
1956-85	*Taught in Government Institute of Art.*

Birth of a Sphere



abandoning it altogether. Already, the design element was preponderant and the naturalistic imagery was just an excuse for making the design. When it was thrown overboard, the character of the work did not change; it was only intensified.

As he developed this style and explored abstract forms, it seems he was attracted, above all, by one form, the form of a big round many-sided rock, not quite round but, as it were, seeking to be round. As Aminul Islam once explained to me, this form to him suggests the idea of emergence, evolution, creation, progress from nothingness to existence, and from that to perfection.

He developed the idea or rather the image in many ways but more than once he depicted the rock-like form in monumental proportions, almost filling the picture area, and over against this form the artist painted one-half or one-third of the canvas dark, in the colours of the rock, as if it had emerged out of the dark abyss.

In the "16 Artists' Exhibition" held at Dacca in 1965, he put up some paintings, two of which were reproduced in the exhibition catalogue, both of which bore the same caption "Painting". One was in the above mentioned style and the other anticipated his newly emerging style in which, instead of solid, ponderous, outlined forms, there were hazy areas in the shape of arcs, elbows, triangles, circles, rectangles and stripes and larger cloud-like areas, all luminous against a dark ground.

He continued to develop this different style together with the other.. In the old style, there were solid and heavy forms in dark sombre colours. In the new, there were luminous pastel coloured mists with streaks in the form of arcs and ellipses and so on. One painting of the latter type was entitled "Dawn".

In the 1967 solo exhibition held at Karachi, there were some paintings in the old style, entitled "Metamorphosis" and "Signs and Symbols" while in the new style there were "Composition in Blue" and "Castle". In the latter, free forms and shot colours and great movement and animation was created by him.

At this stage his work was loosening out. The tremendous technical struggle and the hard discipline imposed by the artist on himself was drawing to a close. Having attained command of the principles of design, he could cast away the mould, shuffle off the dry skin, and indulge in free self-expression, secure in the confidence that the basic demands of art will be met.

The solo exhibition of his work held at Dacca in February, 1968, was a natural culmination of his fifteen year long struggle. He had emerged from his long and arduous journey, as if through dark woods into open sunlit fields. There was a burst of colour and movement, light and joy in his work. Most of his canvases were entitled "Metamorphosis" and all were abstract.

The artist himself tried to explain the change from the old to the new style as a continuation of the theme of emergence, growth, creation, becoming. Certainly, the new imagery is more exciting and suggestive than the rock forms that he used so often in the period 1958-63 to depict matter emerging out of chaos, or heavenly bodies out of dark empty space. But this new imagery of luminous coloured mists and streaks and stripes and bursts of light, contrasts with the old imagery as life against matter, the biological against the physical, the purely aesthetic against the heavily corporeal.

He had travelled a long distance from the Cubist painting "Hawker" of 1959 to the purely abstract "Transformation" series of paintings that he exhibited in 1967 at Lahore. Tehran and Istanbul.



Coy nudes

Red Castle (use of rock forms)





Mohammad Kibria

Mohammad Kibria

Mohammad Kibria (b. 1929) graduated from the Government School of Art, Calcutta in 1950, and came to Dacca. In 1957 he participated in the First National Art Exhibition which was held at Karachi and was awarded the First Prize for his painting "Girl with Flower". It was a simple, rather decorative painting in which half the figure of a girl had been drawn in simple outline and two flowers shown on her breasts. In the same year he sent his painting "Horses in Moonlight" to the First Young Asian Artists' Exhibition held in Tokyo and won the Starlem Award. This was a semi-realistic work.

In 1958 again he entered some paintings in the Second National Art Exhibition held at Karachi and won the First Prize for his painting "Three Souls". This was an almost abstract painting because although it showed three figures, these were no more than three tall triangles. On the tip of the middle one was a circle in which the face was made and on the tip of those on either side were half circles with side-views of the face.

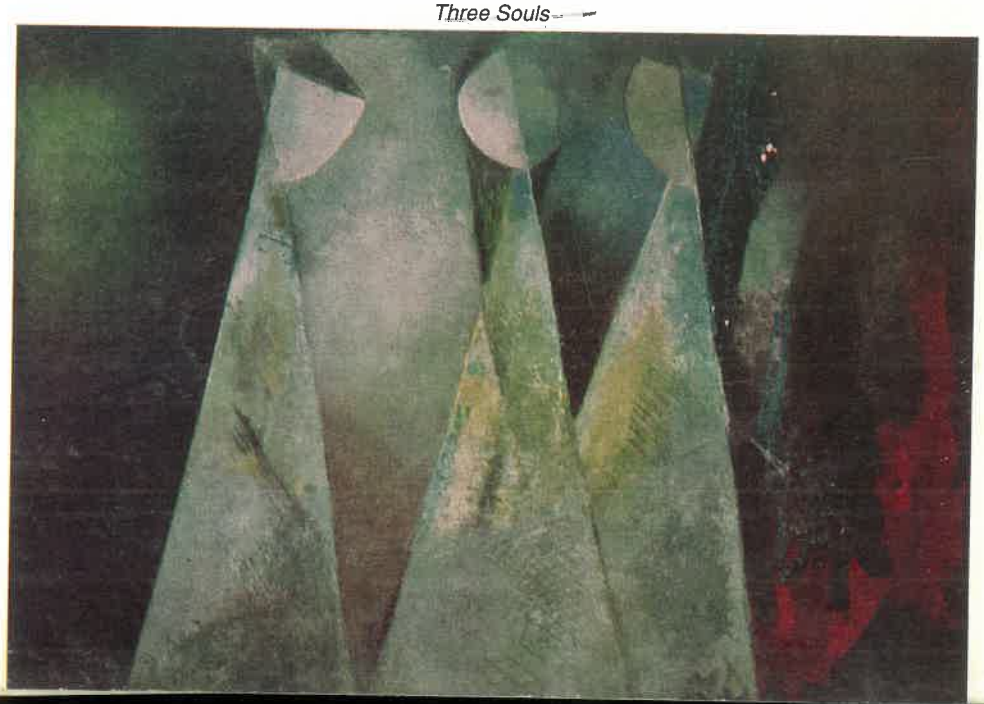
In 1959, Kibria went for advanced studies to the Tokyo University of Fine Arts. There he studied till 1962 and specialized in etching, engraving and lithography, and returned to Dacca in 1963,

In 1962 he participated in the Fifth Contemporary Exhibition of Japan and in the same year his work was included in 18 Best Printmakers' show held at Tokyo. Three of his lithographs were acquired by the U.S. Congress Library. In 1963, a one-man show of his work was sponsored by the Begistu Shimpansa, Tokyo. Even after his return to Dacca. he continued to participate in all the important art exhibitions of Japan, like the Tokyo Biennale .

When he returned, he brought with him sheaves of etchings, lithographs and other graphic prints which were all utterly abstract, in a Japanese way. Grey mist rolling over a sheet of white paper; closely drawn thin white vertical stripes on a black ground; closely packed zigzag of thick vertical stripes, white on black.

Many of the etchings that he did in Dacca also depicted vertical or horizontal white and grey streaks and stripes and bands, mostly with rough edges and free forms, against a black ground. Or he created dark clouds fading out to a grey ground below or above. Much variation of tone and many subtle textural effects were created in the dark and light areas. In one etching entitled "Form in Space", he showed four or five roughly shaped orbs sailing in a yellow space full of scattered dark brown clouds.

Three Souls



MOHAMMAD KIBRIA

29 Born at Birbhum, India.
50 Diploma from Government Institute of Art and Craft, Calcutta.
56-62 Tokyo University of Fine Arts.
59 Starlem Award, Tokyo.
83 "Ekushe Padak".

Hamidur Rahman



Hamidur Rahman

Hamidur Rahman (1928—1988) was the first to rebel against the traditional art introduced into Indo-Pakistan by the British and passed on to the young students by their teachers, Zainul Abedin and others. His solo exhibition of 1957 proclaimed the rise of abstract art in East Pakistan.

His work falls into two groups: mural painting and easel paintig. Both were largely abstract but both contained some bare elements of natural forms, such as arms, legs, eyes, boats, huts and fish.

The murals were more uncompromisingly abstract. For example, take the mural he painted in the Central Public Library of Dacca in 1957. The huge space is divided by straight lines into large and small rectangles and other polygons, including the shapes of huts and boats in diagrammatic form. So it becomes just a huge panel of large geometrical areas coloured flat in different colours.

In the mural that he painted at the Shaheed Memorial in memory of those who laid down their lives during the Bengali language movement of 1953, there was again division of the huge space into large areas, but not rectangular. Here and there were scattered the limbs of the martyrs. But arms and legs were bare diagrams and symbols.

Many of his easel paintings (especially those put up in his 1970 exhibition at Karachi) were riots of scribbled lines in which a glimpse of a human face also could be caught. He gave them such captions as "Torment", There were others entitled "Turmoil" and "The Whirlpool of Love" in which there was no face and only a churning movement had been made with pastels and brush (because it was done in mixed media).

There are paintings of boats in which only a number of thin crescent shapes or mere arcs have been arranged in patterns. There is a painting of fish in which they are shown as many-pointed stars. There are also some paintings ("Khushrang" and "The Flute") in which a human head or two are barely visible,completely enmeshed in a network of very thick lines arranged in many patterns, such as fishbone, leaf with veins, spirals and so on.

There is Expressionist distortion and emotional vehemence and a preference for the grotesque in his work, when his paintings are figurative. Even his purely abstract work is emotionally charged, with deep dark contrasting colours and vigorous thick linework. By comparison, his murals tend to be placid.

Fish bone patterns



HAMIDUR RAHMAN

1928	*Born at Dacca.*
1948-50	*Studied at Government Institute of Art, Dacca.*
1950-51	*Briefly at Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris.*
1952-56	*Central School of Arts and Crafts, London.*
1956	*First solo exhibition*
1958	*Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, USA.*
1962	*First Prize in National Art Exhibition at Lahore.*
1970	*President's Medal for Pride of Performance.*
1973	*Solo exhibition in Commonwealth Institute, London. Painted a 32 ft x 13 ft mural in the Institute.*
1982	*Solo exhibition in Ottawa - last exhibition.*
1988	*Died in Canada*



Safiuddin

Safiuddin

Safiuddin (b. 1922) is another leading artist of Dacca who used to paint very attractive realistic pictures but after his return from London, where he went for higher education in the graphic arts, he became almost abstract.

He graduated from the Government School of Arts, Calcutta, in 1942 and also taught there during 1946-47. Then he came to Dacca and began teaching at the Government Institute of Art and Craft. In 1958, he went to London and obtained a diploma in Etching and Lithography from the Central School of Arts and Crafts.

In 1944, at the young age of 22, he won the President's Medal for a painting he entered in the Annual Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Calcutta. In 1945. his paintings were selected for exhibition in the Exposition Internationale D'Art Modern in Paris, and also for the Contemporary Indian Art Exhibition organized at India House, London. His work also found a place in the memorable Exhibition of the Art of India and Pakistan (2400 BC to 1947) organized by the Royal Academy of Art, London in 1947-48.

Though he became famous later for his etchings, his first laurels were won with oil paintings. His work was realistic but had a rare charm because it was utterly simple and remarkably sensitive and wonderfully true to the subject. In one painting, four small boats lie bobbbig on a wide expanse of water, while one or two fishermen sit or stand fishing in them. In another, two almost nude peasants stand with gathered strands of jute raised above their heads in the act of flinging them forcefully on the stone before them. Their knees are slightly bent, backs curved and heads leaning back, just before lunging forward. Behind them is a huge heap of golden jute. Delightful studies both, executed in broad patches of colour, each so well placed as to indicate the exact posture and also the play of light and shade.

But even in those early days, his heart was in the graphic arts, particularly woodcut. Two of his early woodcuts became very popular and were printed again and again, namely "Santhal Maiden" and "Way Through the Woods". The first shows a buxom woman bending low to fill a pitcher with water from the pool while another is standing with a pitcher on her head and is turning round to look at her companion.

The other woodcut shows village folk wending their way to the market, through the woods, to sell their produce. Framed in the centre of the picture between two thick tree trunks is an old man with an umbrella riding a pony, while a little dog trots along, barking at the crowd. It is a charming glimpse of rural life, dramatically composed and with strong contrasts of light and shade.

Sail Boats



SAFIUDDIN

1922	Born at Birbhum, India
1942	Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Calcutta.
1944-46	Teachership course from same institute.
1945	President's Gold Medal, from Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta.
1958	Diploma in etching and engraving from Central School of Arts and Crafts, London.
1963	President's Award for Pride of Performance.
1978	"Ekushe Padak".



Fishing Nets (Bangladesh period)

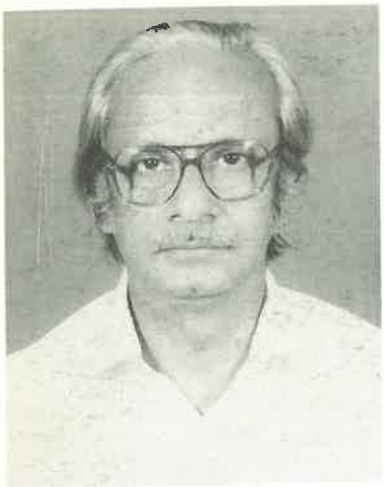
In 1958 Safiuddin left for London but for a few years before that, he had been in the doldrums, producing very little work, and only pondering the course he was to take in the future. He was also soaking in all the experience of life around him, particularly the nightmare of the flood of 1958 that hit the region which is now Bangladesh. Imprisoned in his home and precariously perched on a cot while the flood waters swirled around, he lived a basic truth and fact of Bengal life and landscape. Under dark and leaden skies, as he sat gazing silently at the seething waters below him, he felt as if he could almost read the fearful hieroglyphs of the mysterious demon. The fierce currents of water surging forward and the ripples and patterns left in the mud by the receding flood were like the handwriting and symbolic language in which this demon spoke. These and other images of eroded river banks and uprooted trees and washed off homesteads sprawling in the slimy aftermath, were seared into his mind and carried in his head when he went abroad to learn the latest techniques of graphic art.

In London, he toiled day and night to learn all he could from his able teachers and from the displayed work of leading masters of the art. When towards the end of his stay, he embarked upon original creative work, the moving experiences of the recent flood came back to his mind, to be distilled into beautiful and meaningful abstract forms. They were not abstract in the sense of being purely conceptual and out of the world, for they were of the essence of the flood and almost the actual lineaments of its fearful face.

With this as his theme, he executed a series of outstanding etchings that have become famous. The unerring flow of his curving swinging lines, executed directly on the copper plate in one stroke command admiration. The subtle etching of his dark areas, with aquatint techniques that produce such a corpuscular and velvety black deserves all the praise it has received from those who know that black areas in an etching can so easily become solid, dead and inert. Then, the number of grey tones he can build up, side by side, from white to black, is a tribute to his technical skill and his subtle sensitive artistry.

Many realistic images creep into the design, such as boats and sails and fish, many traditional motifs such as the paisley, the heart shape and scalloped borders, while even the abstract loops and curves and arcs that are drawn from observed facts of life, have an indigenous quality because they are reminiscent of folk art in a distant way. But his work has none of the slapdash quality of folk art, being extremely carefully planned and executed, with no impulsive flings and flourishes.

Quayyum Chowdhury



Quayyum Chowdhury

Quayyum Chowdhury (b. 1934) graduated in 1955 from the Government Institute of Arts, Dacca, and started teaching there in 1964.

In the beginning, he was painting in the Cubist style, picking out the geometric shapes suggested by objects and linking them up into patterns. Areas of light and shadow and reflection were emphasised more than the outlines of objects, to build up this pattern in colour. The different facets and planes of solid forms merged with each other, whether they were side by side or one behind the other, because they were made transparent like crystal .

Some of his work in this style achieved a remarkable degree of success, and one showing an underwater scene, entitled "Bottom" was awarded the First Prize in the National Art Exhibition of 1961. It shows nothing but some wavy movements in the water, but is suffused with rich colour, deep greens and blues, glowing lights and dark shadows. An abstract picture of rare beauty has been built up with images drawn from under-water scenes, to which the imagination of the artist has contributed the complex design.

In the next few years, Quayyum Chowdhury gave up this style and embarked upon a new experiment which involved the use of the indigenous folk tradition. Gone were the complex designs and the mysterious lights and shadows playing on intangible crystalline forms scarcely recognized. He began to use simple squares and circles for the broad framework of the design and to fill them up with decorative patterns derived from Bengali folk art, such as the fish bone motif or the ear of corn or rosettes or heart shapes or zigzags or crisscross hatching or simply a number of parallel lines drawn vertically or horizontally or both. A human or animal or bird form is introduced into the composition as just another element of the design, drawn in the rudimentary and stylized folk style. The colours that fill the picture are arbitrary but so tastefully variegated that the eye travels from detail to detail enticed and entranced. A tree whose foliage has been represented as a circle is filled with a number of traditional patterns and glows like a jewel on the canvas. It is abstract art no doubt but totally indigenous and so rich in local associations and emotional appeal.

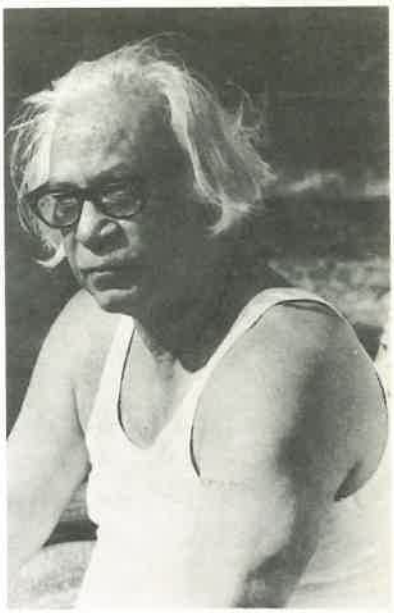
QUAYYUM CHOWDHURY

1934	*Born at Noakhali.*
1954	*Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Dacca.*
1963	*First Prize in National Art Exhibition, Lahore.*
1966	*Grand Imperial Award, Tehran Biennale.*
1984	*"Ekushe Padak".*

Landscape (post - '71)



Quamrul Hassan



Quamrul Hassan

Quamrul Hassan (1921-1988), like Zainul Abedin, was educated at the Government Institute of Art, Calcutta, but he had to interrupt his studies for three years in order to earn a living. This he did by working as an assistant to a village doll maker for whom he painted the earthen dolls in oil colours. He also learned to paint the pictorial scrolls called pata and spent some time with a wandering troupe of folk singers and dancers. In 1947 he finally graduated from the Institute of Art, Calcutta, and from 1948 to 1960, he taught at the Government Institute of Art, Dacca.

Rapid sketches done with the brush were always his favourite form of expression and even his finished paintings have a sketch quality because he makes profuse use of bold spontaneous brush strokes. He came to adopt not only the style and subject but also the colours of the folk painters. The lines have the same verve and dash, the colours have the same carelessly splashed look and the same rawness, unmixed with white or black, and a profuse use of mustard yellow and Indian red..

The mannerism for drawing people, animals, birds, fish and trees are the same so that it has the stamp of indigenous work.

He is fond of depicting sail boats on rough seas or fishing boats in calm backwaters, slim, lissom girls bathing in the village pool or stream or carrying pitchers of water to their homes, craftsmen, such as potters at work, farmers toiling in the fields, such as transplanting rice in ankle-deep waters and so on.

But his favourite subject is the female figure, usually single and often nude or semi-nude, while bathing, and this he does uncommonly well in a slapdash folksy style of his own, with thick brush strokes and deep saturated colour.

His strong emphatic lines, his sharp tonal variations from very light to very dark, and his swinging rhythms give a dramatic quality to his work, especially to his black and white sketches and his lithographs and woodcuts.

For example, take the black and white water colour sketch of the three wide-eyed women moving through a banana grove. It has an eerie dramatic quality produced by the theatrical procession of almost identical figures, the strong contrast of darkness and light



Travel in Bengal Village

QUAMRUL HASSAN

1921	*Born at Bardhawan, India.*
1947	*Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Calcutta.*
1965	*President's Gold Medal*
1988	*Died.*



Fetching! Fetching water.

and the look of fear and dismay in the eyes of the women. Incidentally, this look of dismay comes from the use of the conventional form of the wide open eyes and small dot-like pupil that is common in folk painting of Bengal.

It is worth mentioning that in 1985, one of his paintings entitled "Three Daughters" was printed on a postage stamp in Yugoslavia. Some of his lithographs and monochrome brush sketches were used in UNESCO-sponsored books for the new literates of Asia.

Both Zainul Abedin and Quamrul Hassan tried to develop a national style that was naturalistic and indigenous but both died without being able to win a following among their pupils, the second generation of artists of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) whose leaders were Hamidur Rahman, Aminul Islam, Kibria and Safiuddin.

They all became abstract after some initial naturalistic work. Hamidur Rahman produced the first shock wave when he exhibited his abstract work in 1957 at Dacca, after his return from Europe where he studied art in 1951-56. Aminul Islam studied art in Italy during 1953-56. Safiuddin was in London in 1958, learning etching and engraving. Kibria went to Japan and studied art from 1959 to 1962.

Murtaza Bashir

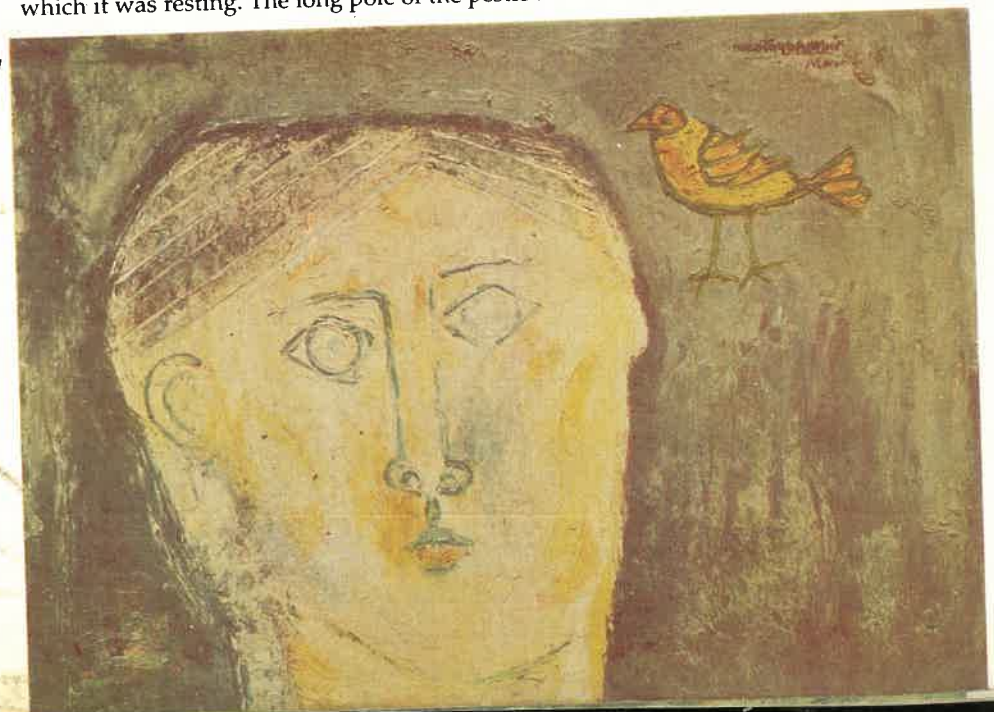
Murtaza Bashir (who has now changed his name to Murtaja Baseer) (b. Dacca 1933) graduated from the Government Institute of Art, Dacca, in 1954, and studied in the Accademia Belle Arti, Florence, 1956-58.

In Italy, he had the opportunity to study the great masters of European art but Bashir says he was most impressed by the simplicity and charm of the Italian Primitives, such as Cimabue (13th century) and Giotto (13th and early 14th century).

However, when he returned to Pakistan and held his first solo exhibition in the country at Karachi in June, 1959, his paintings were done in a simplified style of Cubism. There were sari-clad Bengali peasant women sitting cross-legged or reclining or engaged in some rural occupation, such as rice-husking. The figures and faces were quite realistically drawn in one continuous bold firm line but they were exaggeratedly made heavy-bodied, especially the hands, arms and legs, somewhat in the manner of Picasso's monumental paintings but with no shading to bring out the third dimension. Instead, he divided up the image (leaving the face and hands) with intersecting lines and curves, into a jigsaw of geometrical areas, which were then painted alternately light and dark. In this division, the whole figure was treated as transparent and the outline of the upraised arm overlapped the shoulder behind it, and similarly the elbow overlapped the knee on which it was resting. The long pole of the pestle and the massive mortar, in which the rice



Boy with Bird



MURTAZA BASHIR

(after 1971, Murtaja Baseer)

1933	Born at Dacca.
1954	Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Florence.
1956-58	Studied at Accademia della Belle Arti, Florence.
1971-93	Ecole Nationale Superieur des Beaux-Arts.
1972	Prix Nationale at 4th International Exhibition of Painting at Cannes-sur-Mer, France.
1980	"Ekushe Padak".

was being husked, were also transparent and the figures were visible through them. All the paintings were done in attractive pastel shades of blue, green and yellow.

Bashir was moving freely between Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Dacca and holding exhibitions everywhere. The next exhibition that he held at Karachi in 1963 was quite different from the earlier held in 1959. "Village Scene" was made up of a number of small and large rectangles in very light colours against a very dark background. One vertical rectangle represented a face, with two eyes, one white with a pupil, the other black and pupil-less. Below that the neck and shoulders also were rectangles and two small round breasts. Linked with it were other small and large rectangles in various positions, but all with a thick white outline. There were many other such paintings with such face, neck and bust, each in the form of a rectangle drawn in thick outline, and with an eye or two placed oddly in it. Huts, houses, flowers, sun and moon, also were drawn with thick lines turning at sharp angles. The colours were mostly flat but deep and intense, like red and purple.

There was another group of paintings in which a big face filled the whole picture space and was painted in one or two colours thickly textured. One straight line on the right and one on the left made the eyebrow and turning at right angles came down to make the two lines of the nose. Two hooks stood for the nostrils and two small lines for the lips. Two semicircles made the ears. The eyes were diamond shapes with big pupils within, fixed in a stony gaze. Diagonally scratched lines above the low forehead made the hair. A very small stylized bird appeared near the forehead, which made the head look huge. This was entitled "Boy with Bird".

Another huge face with no forehead and a short neck was drawn with a very thick line or rather black band. It was almost like a wine cup. This black band spread out over one eye and again narrowed into a band right down to the chin. This was the nose. The eyes were two huge double convex shapes, drawn in thin black line, with big pupils, both very high up in the face but not in one line. One side of the face was in one colour and the other side in another, both very rough and patchy. It was entitled "Face in Green"

Both these massive faces were highly dramatic and Expressionistic and so different from the charming green and blue female figures in Cubist style that he exhibited in 1959. His lines had grown thick and vigorous, his images huge and his colours rich, intense and also thick. In making a human image, he was either exaggeratedly Expressionistic, or he was angular and geometrical, making faces and houses and the rest in the form of rectangles with thick outlines. Both were very forceful and full of vigour because the drawing was powerful and the composition firmly structured.

Bangladesh period abstract composition





Syed Jahangir

Syed Jahangir

Syed Jahangir (b. Khulna, 1931) graduated from the Government Institute of Art, Dacca, in 1955, and travelled in Europe and America 1958-59. During the late 50s and in the 60s, he held one-man shows of his work in Dacca, Chittagong, Karachi, Rawalpindi and also in Philadelphia. For a time, he was settled in Rawalpindi and was running one of the first private art galleries of Pakistan there, called Galerie Co-op.

He began by doing rapid landscape sketches in the manner popularised by his teacher Zainul Abedin. Both went to the Chittagong Hill Tracts on sketching trips, at different times. In this, free linework in black was done with a brush or sometimes with a bamboo splinter whose end had been pounded to make a brush. Then colour was applied here and there, very roughly, leaving much of the paper white. He astonished and delighted people with his rapidly dashed off sketches of landscapes and street scenes, and found ready buyers

It was only a beginning but certainly showed talent, which he was quick in developing. His long and loving study of landscape seems to have etched in his mind some lovely images and impressions which he began using as an alphabet to build up an abstract world of his own These fantasy landscapes were no more than streaks and daubs and dashes and also gentle washes suggesting hanging branches and pools of water and the like. It was an abstract and amorphous creation, full of suggestive imagery which described nothing literally but conjured up much. Its appeal lay in linear patterns and colour harmonies and suggestions of depth and distance and also life and movement created by the random brush strokes. One such painting entitled "Moonlight and Rain" which was entered in the National Art Exhibition held at Lahore in 1963, attracted much attention and was printed on the cover of the "Pakistan" Quarterly. The memory lingered for a long time of the exciting vibrancy of line and the subtle tones of colour that built up this enticing painting.

SYED JAHANGIR

1935	*Born at Khulna, Bangladesh.*
1955	*Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Dacca.*
1985	*"Ekushe Padak" awarded.*
1977-92	*Director, Department of Fine Art, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka.*

Tangle wood



Frantically searching for some modern style of painting to join the ranks of the other avant garde artists of Dacca, he hit upon the rather fatuous mode of small square patches of slightly varied colour, sometimes light on a dark background and sometimes dark on light, and even mixed. In one painting, these shapes were not square but almost round. A roughly brushed in ground was prepared with whitish blue-green. On that, roundish forms were created with circular motions of the brush, using a slightly darker tone of the same ground colour, varied here and there with light red and orange and mauve.

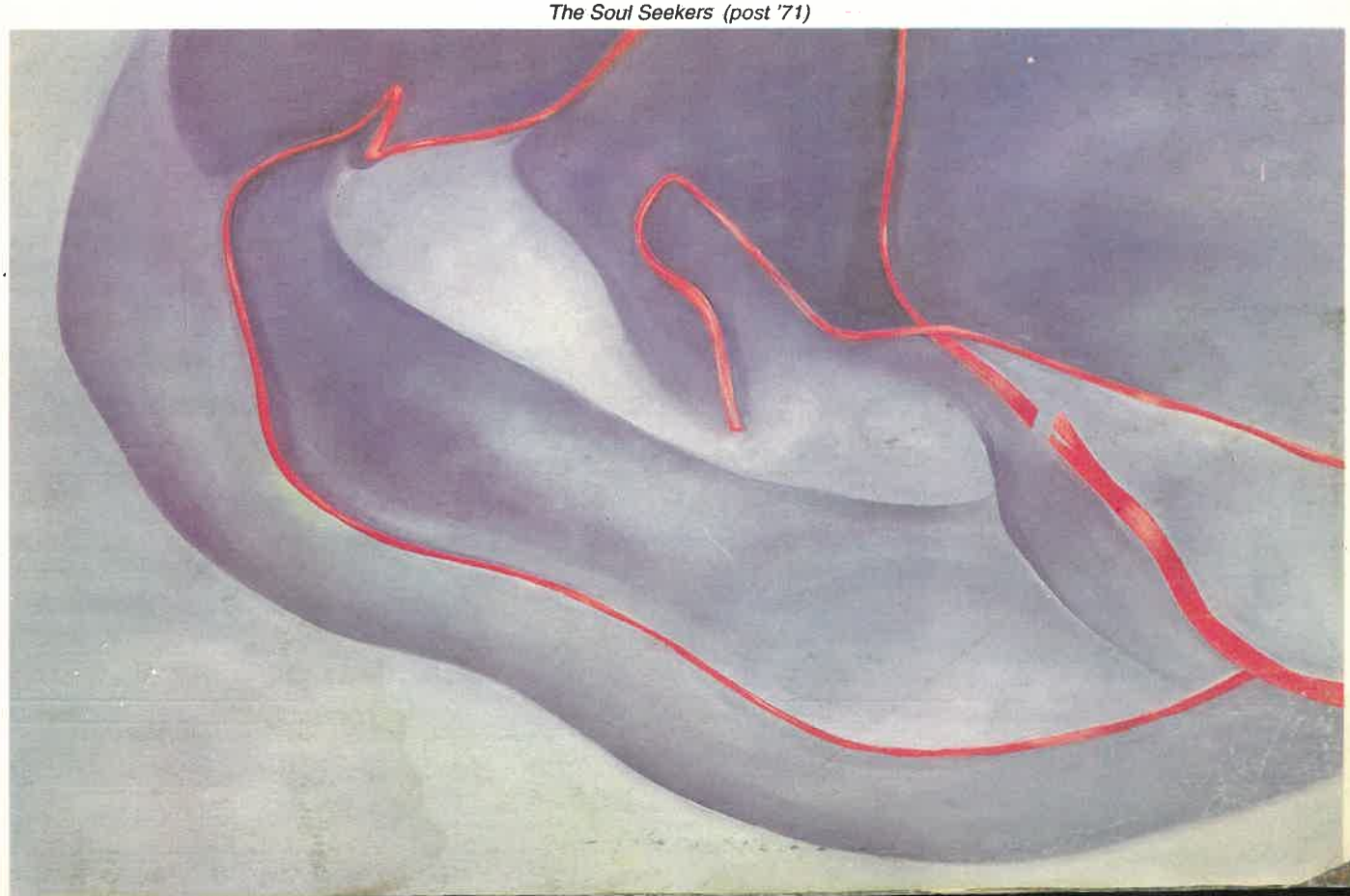
An exhibition of thirty such abstract paintings was held at Karachi in 1968 and the beautiful illustrated brochure printed on the occasion said that the artist had held eighteen one-man shows in Pakistan and abroad, and that more than six thousand of his drawings and paintings had been acquired by collectors all over the world. It is known that scores of coloured landscape sketches were ordered by one hotel to decorate its rooms.

From the smaller painting on the previous page one can gather that Jahangir was trying to move forward from the realistic depiction of landscapes to this free, extremely sketchy colour composition in which a bare suggestion of plants and flowers can be discerned.

It seems that the tide of the art world was moving irresistibly towards insubstantial abstraction, as can be seen from the work of the Bangladesh artists whose work is reproduced in the book "Selected Paintings; Bangladesh" published in April, 1988 by the External Publicity Wing, Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

We have reproduced below a painting by Jahangir printed in that book which is a purely non-objective colour creation. The red band wandering in the immensity of the blue universe is perhaps his idea of the human mortal seeking his soul or his spiritual identity. Looked at purely as art, that is use of colour and creation of images, it is extremely rudimentary in technique and vague in communicating its meaning.

The Soul Seekers (post '71)





Mubinul Azim

Mubinal Azim

Mubinal Azim (1934-1975) is another East Pakistani artist who must be mentioned here because, although born and educated in Dacca, he spent the prime of his life in Karachi, from 1960 to 1973, when he returned to Dacca and died soon after.

He studied in the Government College of Art and Craft, Dacca, 1950-55 and exhibited his work in group and solo exhibitions not only in Dacca, Chittagong and Khulna but Karachi, Rawalpindi and Murree.

Like all East Pakistani artists, he was adept in water colour landscape painting and could dash off a painting in no time. His output was tremendous and in the space of seven years, from 1964 to 1971, he put up fourteen solo exhibitions, the first of which was in Karachi.

The realistic landscapes that he did from imagination, showing the boats and rivers and trees and sari-clad women of East Pakistan, found ready buyers and had a popular appeal. The thin crescent-shaped fishing boats with the nets hanging from a tall mast like a big cone made interesting pictures. Sometimes he showed boats in large numbers, with sails spread.

Inevitably, he painted the half-clad Bengali women carrying pitchers of water. He also painted large sitting and standing nudes very freely and roughly but capturing the beauty of the rhythmic curves and contours of the female figure and imparting the charm of colour and texture by random, impulsive brushwork.

MUBINUL AZIM

1934 (Nov.)	Born
1955	Obtained Diploma from Government Institute of Art, Dhaka.
1964	First solo exhibition (at Arts Council, Karachi).
1963,64,67	Prizes at annual exhibitions of Arts Council, Karachi.
1975	Died in Dhaka

These nudes he continued to paint but they became more substantial and statuesque. The landscape painting, however, underwent a radical change, somewhere around 1967. The various natural objects that made up a landscape were no longer painted by him. Instead, he tried to paint just the idea or the bare suggestion of landscapes in the abstract, by dashingly executing a tangle of thin lines, some light, some dark. that shoot up or swing left and right, like tree trunks and branches.

In still others, even the thin similitude of plants and trees is abandoned and the radiating and recoiling streaks and upward and sideways trajectories suggest explosions and fireworks. Spattering of paint and scattering of showers of pigment add to this impression.

In all these paintings, the subject became quite secondary and subordinate while the whole charm and appeal of the work lay in the wild, vigorous, rhythmic lines, the excitement created by the spattered paint, the depth and almost palpable space suggested by the tonal background, varying from dark to light to dark.

In short, they were abstract lyrics in paint, somewhat like the Action Painting of Jackson Pollock but more delicate and fine, more neatly tied up into a design, more lucid and more consciously planned and altogether more Oriental, and much smaller.

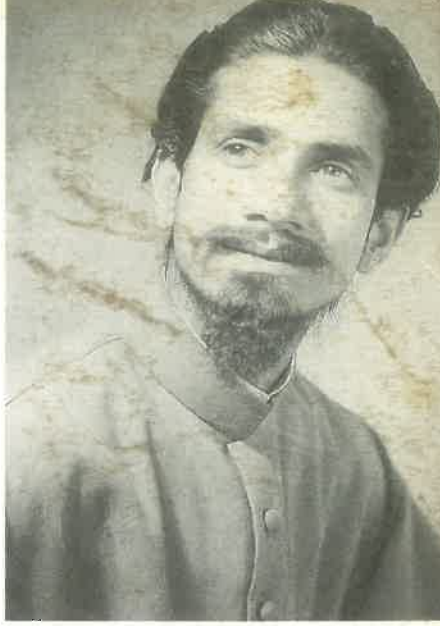
Spring



Colourful Clouds



S. M. Sultan



S. M. Sultan appeared on the art scene of Pakistan in 1949 like a meteor and disappeared just as suddenly in early 1955. He had been wandering for long in Kashmir when he showed up one day in Lahore. With his haggard looks, bright eyes, locks of hair and long cloak, he attracted attention wherever he went. Without a single painting ready he announced in the papers an exhibition of his paintings two weeks ahead. In that time he set upon a big bunch of large sheets of paper with brush and water colour and by the time the exhibition was to be opened, put the last touches on the twentieth landscape of Kashmir done from memory. It is rare to see an artist paint on such large sheets in water colour and so quickly. In 1951 he shifted to Karachi and was a lively figure in art circles. He went to East Pakistan in 1955 but returned in 1967.

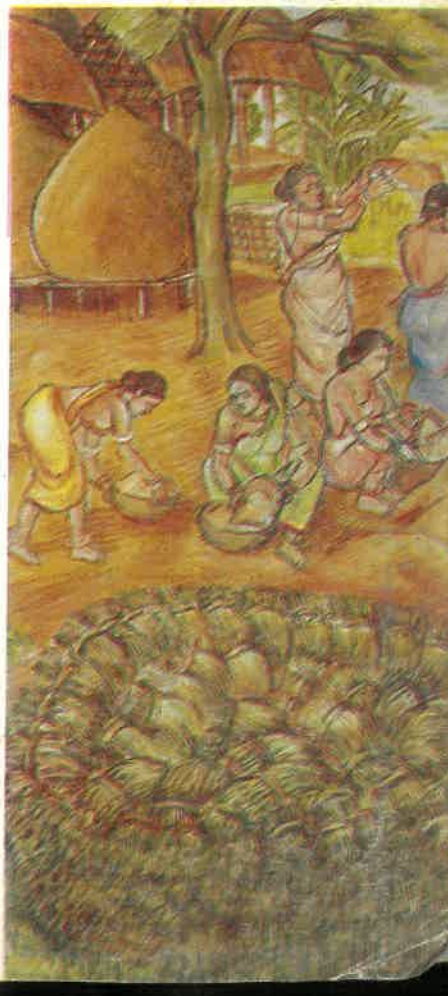
The enormous amount of water-colour painting and pen-and-ink drawing that Sultan did in those days when he lived for some time in Lahore and later mostly in Karachi, is scattered in many homes. However, it is lucky that the biggest collection he left behind, is still lying with artist Nagi, whose house guest he remained for long until he left suddenly barely six months before the secession of East Pakistan, in 1971.

He was, at least in those days, mainly a landscapist. The scenes of his homeland of rivers and boats was ever present in his mind and to a lesser extent, memories of his wanderings in Kashmir, its mountains and grand chinar trees and the Dal Lake and the doe-eyed beauties. In one sitting, he could dash off a landscape with all details, as if the scene is spread before his eyes.

However, it seems, after his return to Bangladesh, he became a figure painter, a people's artist, depicting the life and labours of the poor peasants—ploughing the fields, cutting the harvest, threshing the stalks of rice, carrying it in bullock carts to the market, and in the off season, making baskets with the stalks of the plants. Himself a lean bony though tall man, he painted and drew people exaggeratedly hefty and muscular and even massively built.

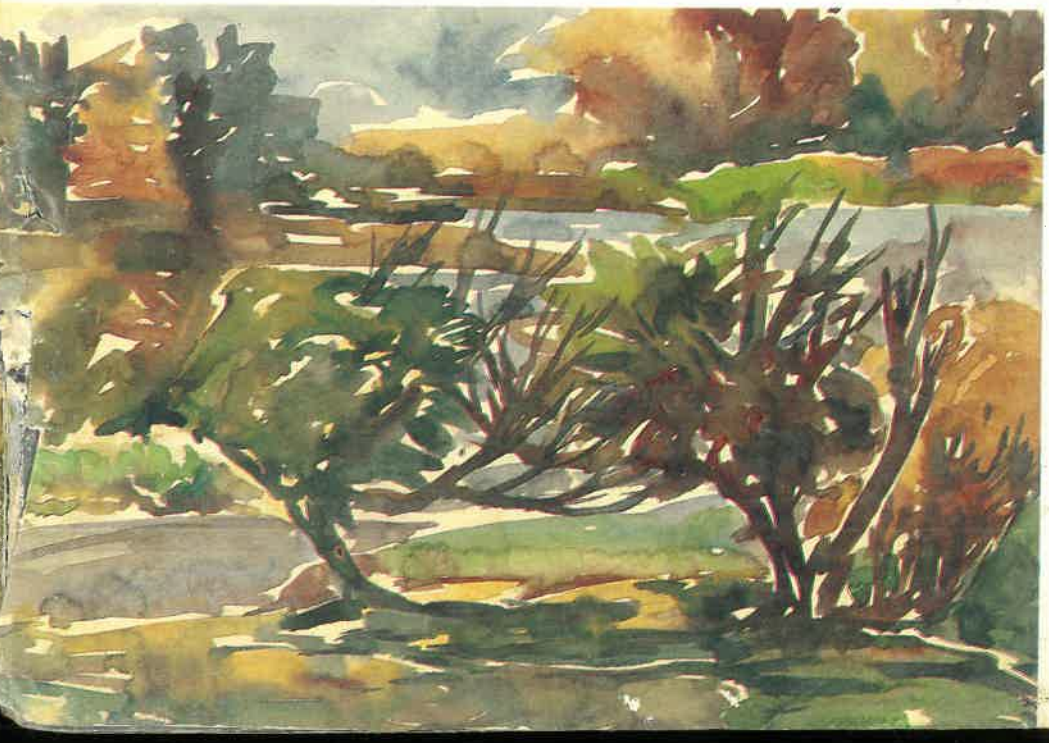
S. M. SULTAN

1923	*Born at Narail, Bangladesh.*
1941-44	*Studied at Government Institute of Arts, Calcutta.*
1946	*First solo exhibition (at Simla).*
1950	*Travelled to U.S.A. and held solo exhibitions.*
1951-53	*Art Teacher in B.V.S. Parsi School, Karachi.*
1953	*Returned home to Narail. Founded a Primary School, a High School and a Fine Arts School there.*
1954-76	*Lived in isolation at Narail.*
1976	*First solo exhibition in Bangladesh (at Dhaka).*
1987	*Solo exhibition in Dhaka under auspices of Goethe Institut.*



A village scene soon after harvest (post - '71)

Verdant Wilderness



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