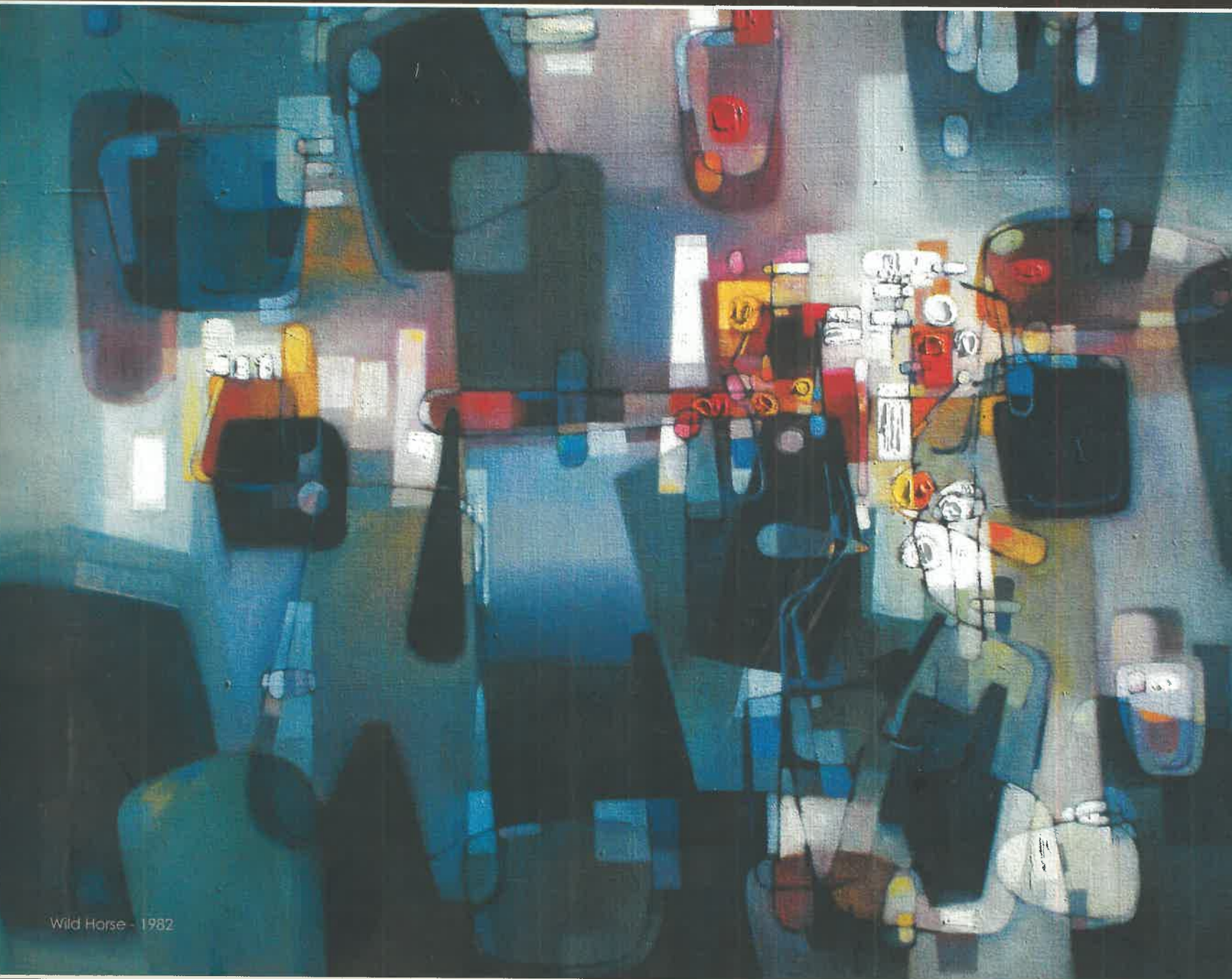


RAHI

THE CUBIST LEGEND OF ASIA
LIFE AND WORK OF MANSOOR RAHI



Wild Horse - 1982

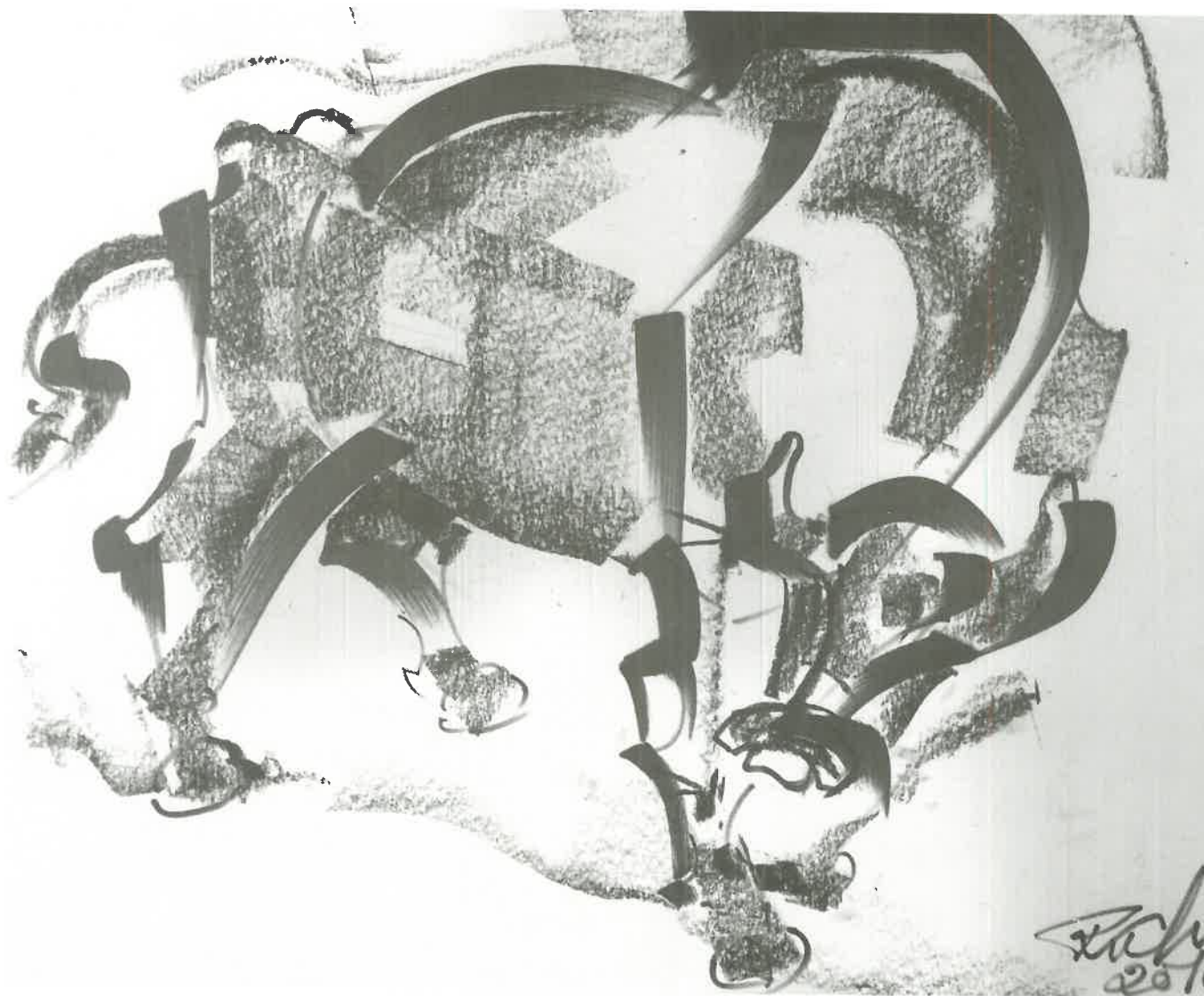
DANISH RAHI

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1.1.2017.

For Farz ul Hassan.


2.10.18.
Ph. 0347-7407777



RAHI

THE CUBIST LEGEND
OF ASIA

LIFE AND WORK OF MANSOOR RAHI

RAHI - The Cubist Legend of Asia

Life and Work of Mansoor Rahi

Author: Danish Rahi

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TAGARI
WHERE IT ALL COMES TOGETHER


THE RAHI GROUP



Rahi at a friends house
Karachi - 1969

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS
AND EXPLORERS OF ARTS AROUND THE WORLD



Sir Mansoor Rahi in front on his teacher
Sir Zain-ul-Abidin's portrait
Dhaka, Bangladesh - 2016

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Foreword

I came to this project as an editor and am leaving it in great admiration of this book's subject, the great artist Mansoor Rahi. As a writer and editor with a degree in art history, I'm happy to be involved in such an exciting book. I knew little about the Pakish art scene prior to working on the project, and I'm leaving it with a wealth of information that I've acquired from the experience. For this, I am incredibly grateful, and it was truly an honor to be a part of this project.



This book recognizes Mansoor Rahi not only as a great artist, but also as a great educator, one who has spread his knowledge of the arts tirelessly. His motivations are selfless and filled with compassion, as Rahi is a man who knows firsthand the importance of promoting the arts in a society. Art is often one of the only methods we have to interact with the world and each other in a meaningful way.

Advancing the arts in a region of the world that is often associated only with violence and terror is so very crucial. Artists like Rahi have worked hard to re-write this unfortunate depiction of Pakistan. Rahi's work aims to provide a modern view of Pakistan, one filled with progressive thinking and creative minds working together for the common good. He has brought his students and family into natural environments, like the Himalayas, which he cherishes. He encourages his students, family, peers—and all of humanity—to discover for themselves the beauty and goodness that nature beholds. For Rahi, searching for meaning in the natural world is a way of life that cherishes the simple, intrinsic goodness of nature and brings wisdom and enlightenment to our often troubling existence. Rahi finds his own humanity—and his muse—in these natural surroundings he so deeply cherishes.

Rahi used the medium of art in order to speak on several political and humanitarian issues, from the global food crisis to poverty and black terror. In Rahi's work, we see the universality of these themes, and how we are all connected in these issues. Through the mode of Cubism, the human forms are distorted and bring to the surface with a greater awareness the psychology and struggle of the subject. In a similar vein to how Picasso recalls Auschwitz and Nazi genocide in *The Charnel House* or the bombing of innocent civilians during the Spanish Civil War in his masterpiece *Guernica*, Rahi brings attention to the people and politics of Pakistan in his art.

Rahi didn't simply channel the work of Picasso and Braque in his Cubist works, he added to the movement with his unique point of view and techniques. He juxtaposes natural imagery with human forms, social issues and other motifs throughout his work. Through connecting with nature, Rahi finds himself, as well as many hidden truths and wisdom about the world and humanity. He shares these findings through his art and teachings, contributing to the art world in a number of extraordinary ways. Indeed, Rahi's impact on the art world should never be diminished.

In 2011, The National Art Gallery in Islamabad held a four-day exhibition titled "United – In the Age of Dialogue," which showcased the contemporary works of around 100 artists from Pakistan. Artists of all levels exhibited, including Mansoor Rahi, who held the honor of having taught three quarters of the artists participating in the exhibit. This example shows the great influence Rahi has had on the art of Pakistan, as both an educator and prolific painter, whose artwork spans over six decades. Throughout his career, he did not stay confined to his studio, as some great artists like him tend to do, who focus on working on their own craft. Instead, he devoted much of his time to helping others hone their skills, which ultimately helped to advance the arts throughout Pakistan. Advancing the arts is Rahi's great mission in life, and he has succeeded greatly in doing so.

Beyond his roles as artist and educator, Rahi has formed a family of artists and creative thinkers who also contribute to the art world and society for the greater good. His wife, Hajra, is also an artist and art educator. His son Danish is a designer and creative thinker, as well as the author of this fine book. One of his grandchildren, Perize Rahi, is following fast in his footsteps, who is already a visual artist at the age of four.

The prolific work of this living legend serves as an inspiration to so many people, as his cultivated personality and wisdom he gained throughout his remarkable life can teach art students and students of life alike. The vision of great men must be admired and revered for lifetimes to follow. Much like the world we live in, the work of this great master is revolutionary and ever-evolving. To improve as a society—and as a race of humans united by the similar goal of survival—we must never stop learning. This tale of Rahi's life exemplifies the beauty in leading a life filled with passion, beauty, greatness and shows the limitless possibilities that the arts provide.

Crystal Erickson
Editor
Minneapolis, MN

Preface

The idea of this book came to fruition on one hot morning during the summer of 2016, when I was driving my father to his beloved mountains in northern Pakistan. I was waiting for the warm winds to cool down as my altimeter steadily climbed when my father mentioned the countless attempts to write a book about him. A book that was substantial, concrete, covered all the aspects of his life and provide readers a clear, holistic picture of his life and work.

My father remembered several credible attempts -- some even from the 1970s and 80s -- that were officially published and read by thousands. However, they were unable to capture the scope of his work, thought process and life. He humbly mentioned various professional writers, journalists, and art critics, friends and family members who took the initiative of capturing the ocean in a bottle. Who all tried writing the book in the way he envisioned it, but failed at some point in the process.

We agreed that it was going to be a complicated and extensive undertaking to create such a book. It would not only require substantial research. It would also require the technical management of information and the knowledge he has to offer to readers. Covering well over half a century of his highly progressive and professional career as an artist, as well as seven decades of his intriguing and eventful life would not be an easy task by any means. And it needed to be done in a way that made sense and remained simple, intelligent and interesting.

Being a professional designer, author and a strategic creative leader -- who has worked with some of the world's biggest brands, Fortune-500 companies and top ad agencies -- I knew what I was looking at as a creative project. Understanding the stage of his life and career, and the real need to secure a true legend, I realized that if we were ever going to make this happen, I would have to take it upon myself and get the job done.

All bets were off when my father said, "If anyone who can do this and do it right, it's you, as you know me the best." My greatest mentor and the man I respect the most, had given me an important task. Indeed, it was the least I could do.

I wrote this preface five months after that initial conversation, when the book was nearly complete. I thank my research coordinators, reviewers, fellow designers, proofreaders

-- in the U.S. and Pakistan -- for coming together and helping me through this project. I will leave it up to you, the reader, to decide if we were able to achieve our goal.

The book serves just few drops from the greatest ocean I have ever come across. My research team and I have come to believe that no book can fully capture this great master in entirety, so we will never come to know the limits of his creative depths. Our skills as researchers -- though extraordinary -- are not enough. He is simply irrepressible, indeed a true Rahi.

Thank You
Danish Rahi
Author

About the Author:

Danish Rahi is an accomplished Pakish-American creative professional with over 20 years of American corporate and agency experience. Diverse understanding of branding, CPG design, UX, developing and managing high-level creative assets, running global campaigns and delivering micro to macro level multifaceted creative counseling.

He was born in a family of celebrity artists and visionaries and started his professional career early by selling a tv jingle to a private tv network at the age of 11. Since his school years he kept himself busy with multiple underground design, music and creative projects. Immediately after earning his bachelors in Graphic Design from Troy University Alabama, he moved to New York and secured his first Fortune-500 client. He earned his Masters degree in Design Management from Pratt Institute New York in 2007 geared towards strategic management, intelligent design, sustainability and the emerging challenges of the 21st century.

During his high paced and progressive career path he got the opportunity to work for several fortune five-hundred companies, top production houses and some of the biggest agencies in the world. Several global, iconic and multi-billion dollar brands can trace his signatures on their path to success. His award winning work has appeared in renowned magazines and TV channels. Beside his career as a seasoned design expert, he also cherished his sideline experiences in cinematography, video production, and music.

Danish Rahi is also the author of "The Pakish Identity", world's first-ever book on the branding and identity of Pakistan and the creator of the first-ever currency symbol design for Pakistan. He also coined several key terminologies including the term Pakish to refer to the culture and people of Pakistan.



Acknowledgment

This book covers some very interesting dimensions of my life, some of which were kept hidden until now. It gives a clear picture of who I am as a painter, a person, and where I am coming from. I understand the mammoth undertaking to attempt to capture a wild ocean in a bottle, so I am absolutely delighted to see this book come to life. I would like to thank everyone involved, especially my son Danish, for writing and spearheading this project and whose efforts made it all happen. I am also extremely thankful to my wife Hajra, my family, friends, fans, and all my students around the world for all of their efforts, support, love and kindness.

Mansoor Rahi

Introduction

If you sit with me and listen to my life story, you will see a perpetual evolution in my perception of art. I have been an assiduous learner, and art has been a continuous marathon to me. I cannot show you all the moments of development and involvement in my thinking and in my work that I created throughout my life. Had there been a practical way of recording those moments of enlightenment, I could have shown you my evolution. Discovering the mysteries and miracles of nature is the track on which this marathon took place.

Since I was a child, observing the miracles of life had been my favorite pastime. I studied life in a myriad of forms and shapes. I saw it in swaying trees, rustling leaves and branches, undulating water currents, soft and hard rocks, soil of different textures, bright celestial orbs and stars, and in other signs of nature.

It is the same with humans -- from skin tones to body postures. I closely studied the human anatomy, which was essential in order to draw a human body. I spent time dissecting dead bodies with medical students in order to achieve this goal. To me, everything is a miracle of God. Just like the other miracles that I just mentioned. As an artist, I am a firm believer in God.

Mansoor Rahi

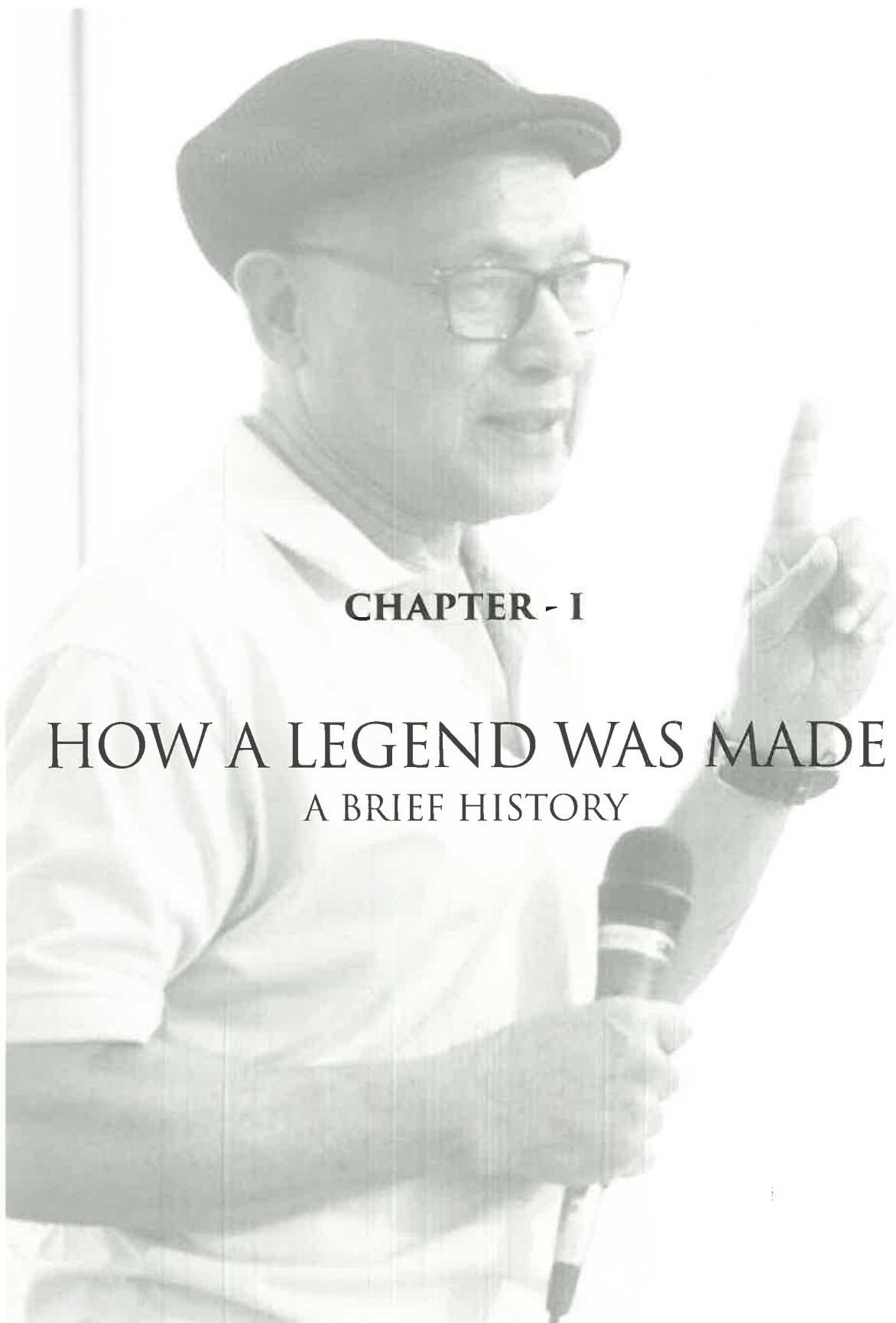
The book is strategically designed for the ease of readers, with easy-to-read text accompanied by various small and large art galleries distributed throughout the book. It begins with a brief life history and discussion of other key elements before moving onto the book's main art galleries, where readers can admire Rahi's work throughout various periods of evolution, which spans over decades.

The book gives a vivid and holistic picture of the subject matter. Some unique angles are discussed in the book, including the artist's special connection with the mountains, his spiritual life as a healer and a yogi, and his life as a dedicated teacher. Some of the material in this book has remained hidden or unknown until now. In addition, the information presented here is done in a way so that it is easy to read and comprehend.

The book gives a clear visual of the Rahi's life and work, but it deliberately does not go into any advanced technical or academic discussions regarding his work and phases of evolution, as that is a very engaging subject matter for an entirely separate book.

This book is a must read and view resource for everyone, especially those in the field of arts. It serves itself as a great and unique resource for the understanding of Abstract Cubism and its spread in Asia.





CHAPTER - I

HOW A LEGEND WAS MADE

A BRIEF HISTORY

- THE BEGINNINGS IN BENGAL -

One bright spring morning in Bengal during the year 1943 turned out to be a big day in the life of a bright little toddler named Mansoor, who was barely five years old. As was the family custom, he was about to begin his formal education on this auspicious day. His teacher, parents, relatives, neighbors and friends filled the courtyard of the big house in the lush green village right at the juncture of Kalindri and Mahananda rivers.

As everybody looked on in anticipation, prayers were recited. A slate and a white chalk were placed before the child. As the tradition goes, he was expected to write the first alphabet of the Bangla language in view

of everyone. Little Mansoor asked for a bigger chalk and his uncle happily handed him a full-size white chalk. He then asked for an even bigger one, finally agreeing on working with a large chalk-stone -- a hard lump of calcium carbonate the size of a regular soap bar, which was quite common in those days for writing on black boards in village hut schools.



*Mansoor Ahmed (Rahi) at three
Oldest recorded image - 1942*

Firmly holding the white chalk in his little hand, the child went straight to the furthest corner of the roofless courtyard, which was surrounded by connected balconies. He sat down and on all fours started stroking on the courtyard floor. Surrounded by his family and relatives, he moved across almost the entire length and width of the courtyard, which must have been at least thirty by thirty feet in size. Those around him were caught by surprise, and quickly became interested in what the toddler was doing. They looked on, eyes wide open, as he moved from one corner to the next, making something massive – bold, sharp and unbroken.

However, doubts and puzzlement quickly started seeping into the onlookers. They wondered if little Mansoor would be able to complete his assignment that day. It was then that Mansoor's uncle Zia-uddin Ahmed, who was an accomplished artist, ran upstairs to the balcony. He could see that his nephew was doing something extraordinary. He could see this from his elevated vantage point in the courtyard what the child was trying to accomplish. With utter excitement, he started shouting and running around

the connected balconies, telling onlookers what the talented toddler was creating. He cried out with joy when Mansoor completed his drawing, "Look, what a beautiful alphabet Mansoor has drawn!"

Little Mansoor had actually drawn the first Bangla 'horf' (alphabet) sizing at about thirty feet. The crowd echoed with a resounding applause as they realized what they just witnessed. And that was just the beginning.



Mansoor at five with his younger brother Magfoor - Only three years before the partition of greater India when the world witnessed the largest human migration in history (1947) - RajShahi (Silk City), India (now Bangladesh), 1944

Since childhood, Mansoor loved and idolized his uncle Zia-uddin, whose paintings hung on the walls of the big house. He viewed them with fascination, engrossed in the lines and colors that made the paintings come alive. At that time, no one could anticipate that he actually aspired to be a great artist like his uncle one day.

In his youth, Mansoor played with slates and chalks. He drew on one slate after another and hung them next to his uncle's paintings. As the number of his chalk drawings grew, more slates appeared on the walls. It quite possibly could have been the first black-and-white art-on-slate gallery that a young artist ever created.

The world now knows that child as 'Mansoor Rahi' an accomplished and renowned artist whose work is seen with much respect by art lovers and connoisseurs across the world.

- THE SCHOOL DAYS -

Mansoor was born on 1st January 1939 in the watery green village of Maldah, West Bengal. In the wake of the partition of British subcontinent in 1947, his father, Muhammad Yunus, migrated to East Pakistan's sleepy town of Rajshahi (now a bustling metropolis) where Mansoor completed his schooling.

During his school life, he fell in love with the paintings of his art teacher, Suresh Babu, a soft-spoken yet impressive artist from Calcutta. Babu's paintings were prominently displayed on the classroom walls. Mansoor would keep staring at those paintings during class. He paid little attention to what was happening in the class, and was often reprimanded for his absent-mindedness. He might have been thinking, Why can't I hang my slate drawings beside those paintings?

One day, he came to school much earlier in the morning. He went straight to his empty classroom and started drawing on the blackboard. No one in class knew who was responsible for the drawings, and the teacher was not too happy about what he saw, for he expected a sparkly clean board before starting his class each day. The next day, again, the teacher saw a fresh drawing on the blackboard. He asked who had done it. The class remained silent. In a huff, the teacher went to the headmaster's office and complained. The cleaning staff was called, because Babu thought the cleaning staff wasn't doing their jobs properly and that they were leaving the boards uncleaned. The cleaning staff explained to the teacher that they had cleaned all the desks and blackboards as usual, and that they did not know who drew on the blackboard.



Mansoor in his Boy Scouts uniform - Dhaka, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), 1952

This soon became a pattern. Mansoor started coming early to school each day, moving from one classroom to another, filling large blackboards with his chalk drawings. Finally one day, Babu caught Mansoor in the act. Mansoor was called into the headmaster's office, where he got a long lecture on how to behave properly in the class. At the end of the lecture, when the headmaster asked if it was all clear to him, Mansoor was unable to answer. Instead he apologized and told the headmaster that he couldn't pay attention to the lecture, for he was too busy observing the marvelous artwork and paintings hanging in the headmaster's large office. He had never seen so many beautiful, nicely framed paintings. Some of those paintings were done by Mansoor's art teacher.

Realizing the fact that he was looking at a born artist, the school headmaster asked Mansoor's art teacher to have a discussion with Mansoor's father, a well-respected District Judge, about his son's great talent. Soon after, one day Suresh Babu explained to his father. Babu recommended that Mansoor further develop his growing artistic talents under the mentorship of the great artist and educationist Zainul-Abedin at the Dhaka Art Collage in Dhaka once he finishes his schooling. The wise art teacher firmly believed that Mansoor would succeed him one day – by becoming a great artist.



Teenager Mansoor - 1950's

During the final years of Mansoor's schooling he was also involved with Boy Scouts and the National Guard, where he received a complete training on firearms and physical combat. Mansoor still remembers presenting the Guard-of-Honor award to Ayub Khan, who served as the Commander in Chief of Pakistan at the Dhaka Airport at the time.

In those days, Calcutta (now Kolkata) was considered the only major center of arts in the entire subcontinent. However, after 1947, many Bengali Muslim artists and thinkers moved to Dhaka, and it slowly became the center for Muslim Bengal's arts and culture. The Institute of Arts and Crafts was established, pioneering formal higher education in a variety of art mediums. Eminent artists like Zainul Abedin, Kamrul Hassan, Safiuddin and Anwarul Haq settled in Dhaka and also founded an art school. They were followed by more artists like Muhammad Kibria, Abdul Razzak and Khwaja Shafique in the 1950s.

- THE HAPPENING COLLEGE YEARS -

Under the wings of his greatest mentor, Zainul Abedin, Mansoor started college at the Dhaka College of Arts. Due to his outstanding work, Mansoor slowly gained Zainul Abedin's attention. His time during the college years was pretty happening and was filled with mesmerizing adventures and events. An entire book or countless films could be made just on those adventures.

I - When Mansoor Saw a Leaf

Mansoor started his higher education in 1956. Since childhood, he was very proud and confident about his drawing skills. However in the very beginning of college, he was simply asked to draw a leaf. Seeing himself as a skilled artist, he felt a little insulted with the idea of drawing a simple leaf. He considered drawing petty objects like a leaf worthless. It was at that point that his teacher, Sir Kibria, started bringing Mansoor's attention to the details and opened up his eyes to see a leaf on a whole other level. Kibria explained to Mansoor in great detail the shape and color of the leaf. He made him see the huge world hidden in such a small leaf, with its curves and bulges, its complex network of midribs and veins and its undulating colors.

When the teacher asked what he actually saw in the fine pattern of a leaf, he found himself speechless, unable to describe it in much detail. His teacher then explained to him the intricate shapes and forms in a single leaf, and how the countless leaves of the same species are different from each other yet they look the same. Similar in color, shape and size but still so different. His teacher



College years of Mansoor, Dhaka Art College. A portrait of Jinnah visible on the wall - Dhaka, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), 1957

explained to him that even when all the leaves look green, if one looks closely, they may find a wide variety of colors. Even if a leaf is red, one can see scarlet red or oxblood red in that leaf. Among the greens too, there were countless greens that his teacher would find in leaves and show him.



II - Kibria - A Great Mentor

One of Mansoor's great teachers was Mohammed Kibria, who unraveled the mysteries and miracles of different forms and shapes of life to him. Mohammad Kibria was born on January 1st 1929 in West Bengal. He was the Alma Mater of the University of Calcutta, class of 1950 and Tokyo University of the Arts. A few years after moving from Dhaka in 1951, he began teaching at the Government Institute of Fine Art, where he was designated 'Professor Emeritus'.

He became the doyen of a group of East Bengali artists expressing themselves in non-figurative, abstract forms relying on colors and textures. His counterparts included some of Bengali's great modernists, including Aminul Islam, Devdas Chakroborty and Murtaza Bashir. He was influenced by abstract expressionism, although most of his work in the early fifties was figurative and realistic. A scholarship to study painting and graphics at the Tokyo University of Art (1959-1962) was a turning point for his artistic style. The work done during his stay in Tokyo and even after his return had a discernible Japanese influence, which manifested itself in a series of work such as Fishing Boats and Praying and Three Faces, which are both done in black ink on rice paper. Interestingly, these work are done in Tokyo in a minimalist abstract style that show a connection to Bengal.



Mansoor's teachers at Dhaka Art College - Sir Kibria (center) and Sir Zainul Abedin (2nd from left)



Nilachol, Bandarban - Chittagong Hill Tracts - Bangladesh

Photo courtesy: Rakib Arnab - Photo ID: 488179072

III - The Jungle Tales

Bengal, where Mansoor spent his early years, had a magnificent natural landscape to hold his fascination. Nature always left an impression on Mansoor, and he still recalls great stories from that land of the golden fiber and loves to tell them with great expression. He is a great art teacher and also an extraordinary storyteller.

During the time when Mansoor was in his third year at Dhaka Art College, the art students were given frequent assignments to draw hundreds of sketches and paintings. They were often sent to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a densely forested area and a sanctuary for wildlife, which spread over thousands of square miles with a maze of streams and rivers that are inhabited by indigenous tribes.

Deer Love:

During one of Mansoor's Chittagong trips along with his longtime friend and classmate Ashish Kumar Sengupta, who was also an accomplished artist. They stayed in a little tree-house, which was the official accommodation provided by the forest officer. These types of houses were made with simple bamboo high up in the massive jungle trees. The only way to enter was through a narrow bamboo ladder, which was pulled up into the tree house after climbing up in order to keep the wild animals out.

After a long day of tracking and landscaping, Mansoor and his friend were just getting ready to sleep in their tree-house when they heard some strange noises coming from the forest, which sounded like some large bird -- like a peacock -- sending out a distress call. They could see some people underneath their tree-house with a hunted deer placed on

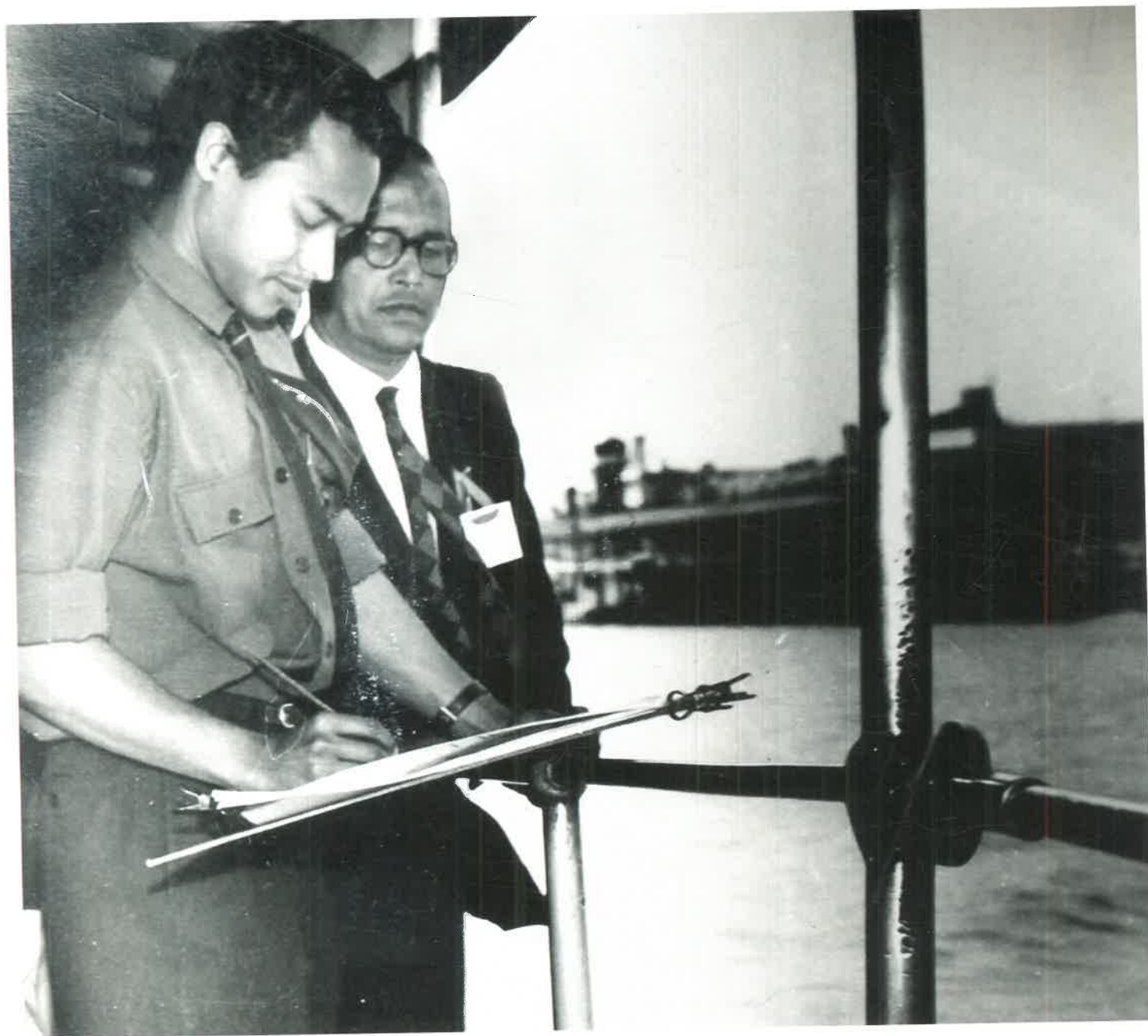
a clean tarp. Mansoor remembered that it was hunted earlier that day. He dropped down the ladder and climbed down to investigate. The forest officers explained to him that the loud calls they are witnessing is in fact the doe looking for her dead mate. They told him that when a deer is shot, its grieving mate might try to stay close for as long as it can without caring about getting caught or killed. It was not long when a doe suddenly appeared from the camouflaging bushes.

One of the forest officers ordered his hunters to take her down, then a loud gunshot echoed through the forest and the doe slowly fell down to the ground grasping her last breath. It all happened within seconds. Mansoor was completely startled from witnessing the incident. The forest officer simply explained that the doe would have died nevertheless, as it would have stopped grazing after her mate died and become prey to jungle cats or wolves.

Mansoor recalls this experience vividly, as the moment was significant to him and stuck with him throughout his lifetime. To him, it was pure love, worthy of much higher respect than that of Romeo and Juliet or Heer and Ranjha.

A TLR camera takes Mansoor's attention as he works on his painting (right) - Dhaka Art College, Dhaka, 1958





Mansoor sketches away on a ferry while his teacher watches over his shoulder

The Dragon Slayer:

Mansoor's jungle tales would be incomplete without mentioning the tale of the huge reptile that he and his group of friends came across in the Chittagong forest. One afternoon during a picnic barbecue known as the Bon-Bhojan in Bengali, they were busy grilling some chicken. The barbecue grill, which they thought was placed on an old, dead tree trunk covered with mud and leaves, suddenly started moving. At first they thought it was an earthquake. Since nothing else was moving, they quickly realized that it was not earthquake but something equally dangerous, as the earth was definitely shifted right in front of their eyes. The tree trunk slowly shifted its shape and rose up several inches, knocking over their hot barbecue grill.

Instead of running away, these young, curious and daring minds started digging into the earth with a spade and after few minutes of digging, they noticed fresh blood coming out of the ground. One of Mansoor's more experienced friends shouted that it must be a snake underground. He was right, for it was a huge python resting several feet underneath the ground and they were having a barbecue pretty much right on top of its back. Such snakes were considered a serious threat to human life and their livestock in these areas, especially if they were found close to villages.

They dug up more of the snake, exposing the python's head and rest of its body. They knew that with just some old spades in their hands that they were no match for this enormous beast, which was over twenty feet long. Mansoor and one of his comrades sprinted to a nearby village to find weapons, while the others kept an eye on the wounded python. Mansoor quickly returned with an old Winchester model 37 break-action shotgun. Due to his gun training in the military, he had no trouble loading the weapon, and aimed it at the head of the beast and killed it quickly. The slain reptile was cut into pieces and presented before the magistrate, who issued a reward to young Mansoor, the brave dragon slayer.

Romantic Wilderness:

Youth has its own natural charm and attraction. But even in his youthful days, Mansoor had a pure soul that never allowed him to stray from the path of the chaste. The young artist always respected his traditional, cultural and family values. He adored the natural beauty and the simplicity of the Naga, Juma and Chakma tribes living in the hilly forests of Chittagong.

In those days many of tribal people lived up in the tree-houses with bamboo ladders and spoke in their native language. Young Mansoor spent months living with these cheerful and simple Chakma tribes. He was impressed by their incredible hospitality and warm friendship. Mansoor was even more popular with the young Chakma women, who wanted his company because they admired his painting skills. He drew sketches of Chakma girls husking rice and beating the husk with bamboo poles. Basically poor, these girls had no love for



Mansoor's college year - Dhaka, 1959

money. However, they appreciated their everyday medicines and loved the chocolates that Mansoor brought back for them from the city of Dhaka.

One of the Chakma girls became particularly attached with Mansoor. When an airplane flew by over her little village one day, Mansoor told her that there are real people inside that plane, and not just one or two but possibly more than fifty. Her jaw dropped with astonishment. Mansoor also gave the pretty young girl a beautiful walking stick that was used to repel snakes. The pretty tribal girl loved her gift and carried it along with her everywhere. She was fascinated by his paintings and sketches and usually stayed around him while he did his artwork, laughing, giggling and enjoying his company.



*Modern Day Chakma Tribes
Courtesy: Kolkata Chakma Students Association*

She was bold and pretty vocal about her affection towards him. For Mansoor, who was strongly attached to his city life and family traditions, it was nothing to be taken seriously. Nothing could change the path of his life so drastically, as to fall in love with a pretty jungle damsel.

When it was time for Mansoor to go home and return to college, he packed up his stuff, comprised mostly of his canvases. He expected a traditional goodbye when he told his young admirer that it was time for him to leave. But instead she asked him to wait and ran to her little hut. She came back with a small bundle of her own belongings and expressed her desire to go with him. According to the old tribal traditions of the area, just her desire to stay with a man of her choice would make them a couple. They would live together and raise a family but for Mansoor it was an awkward revelation.

At first he tried to reason with her, explaining to her his situation and cultural norms, which made it impossible for him to even think like the same way she was. Unwilling to understand any of that, she firmly gripped Mansoor's arm and pulled out kukri -- a long, curved dagger -- and threatened to kill him if he left her.



Portrait of the Chakma girl by Mansoor - 1960

Staying true to his habit of shying away from aggression, Mansoor snapped his strong, chiseled arm back from the soft-but-desperate grip of the beautiful Chakma girl, whose teary eyes looked at him in despair. He started walking away but she followed him. He walked faster, but she kept up to pace with him. For a moment he was stunned, not knowing what he should do to get himself away from the girl. He knew he needed an ingenious plan in order to escape. So he looked around, noticed a clearing and then ran for his life.

The pretty little jungle damsel ran after him, calling after him to stop, crying in anger, then weeping from the pain of parting. Sprinting deeper and deeper into the forest, Mansoor quickly left her far behind.

But he wasn't safe yet. The sound of his running footsteps through the woods drew a pack of wild dogs towards him. Alone and deep inside the forest, Mansoor dared not to look back and see how close the dogs were. With the barking getting louder, he knew the pack was closing in on him, but he kept running -- like his wild brush stroke on canvas.

After minutes that passed like eternity, he could see some signs of another village. A pack of dogs from that village sensed the invading wild pack. Defending their territory, the village dogs went on alert and started barking fearlessly. Their barking caught the attention of the villagers, who came running, only to find poor Mansoor in his perilous situation.

The friendly villagers took him to their village. Mansoor, who was happy to be saved from the vicious pack of dogs, never told the villagers about his whole ordeal and where he was actually coming from. When he regained his good senses, he felt sad and remorseful for his innocent Chakma friend he had deserted, but swore never to go back to her village.

Mansoor's heartwarming tales do not end here. Many city damsels also liked him and wanted to spend time with the brilliant budding artist. However, Mansoor's focus was completely on his career, which kept him busy painting thousands of canvases.

Little did the artist know that he was on his path of making himself and his work known throughout the world, and that he was going to meet a young female artist -- thousands of miles away -- whose beauty and talent would steal his heart forever.

- THE LIFE-ALTERING MOVE TO WEST PAKISTAN -

It was in 1962 that Mansoor graduated not only with the first division, but also as the top-ranking student of his art college. He was already a winner of several awards and prizes. After his graduation, when it was time for the college to select their best student artist for a sponsored solo show in West Pakistan, the college principal Zainul Abedin picked Mansoor. He loved the mountains since childhood and knew very well that West Pakistan's northern areas are home to some of the highest mountains in the world. It was his dream to see them in real life and he happily agreed to go.

The young Bengali artist first set his eyes on the Arabian Sea in 1963. He was hosted by the Karachi Art Council in Karachi, a mega-metropolis known as the "city of lights". This happened when Ayub Khan was the president of Pakistan, a leader Mansoor admired and also remembered presenting guard-of-honor to him as a child.

His show at the Karachi Art Council was a hit. Knowing Dhaka as a key hub for arts and the home to many great artists of that period, many curious art lovers came to see and admire his work. Among them was a pretty young Urdu girl, who came with her friends to see the show and was in awe of his bold work.

She had never seen such force in the strokes and a calculated flight from realism. She called upon Mansoor and started admiring his work, but her strong poetic Urdu accent flew over Mansoor's head until one of her friends interpreted in English. Mansoor was greatly impressed by the young girl's knowledge of the arts. Her critique reflected an acute understanding of the arts, which was surprising for Mansoor, with what little Urdu he could understand. It grew clear to him that he was not listening to one of his



Mansoor's first show in West Pakistan - A lost tradition of opening art shows by igniting a candle of hope - Young Rabia Zuberi (another budding legend) seen behind Mansoor - Karachi, 1962

regular fans or admirers, but someone who held in-depth understanding of visual arts. The sharp and talkative Urdu speaker explained to him that she was an artist herself, and was in the process of opening an art school in Karachi.

Clearly impressed by her looks, style, charisma and knowledge, Mansoor responded in his thick Bangal accent with one of the few sentences he learned in Urdu, "Ap Ki Nom Kiya Hoi?" (What is your name?) – And she responds: *Hajra – I am Hajra...*

This was the beginning of a friendship that would eventually grow up to form one of the most famous and legendary artist couples to have ever lived in the history of their nation.

- SETTLING DOWN ON THE ARABIAN SEA -

Just a few days later Mansoor visited Hajra's art school in Karachi -- called Mina Art School -- named after her father, Mina Zuberi. He also met Hajra's older sister, Rabia Zuberi, a humble and budding artist, sculptress and teacher. He saw that both sisters were working hard with very little resources, but against all odds trying to establish something remarkable.

Mansoor could understand the importance of opening an art school in a part of a country where no other art schools were established. He could also see its potential for greatness. So he started visiting the sisters more frequently, mingling with the students and opening up a hidden new world of art techniques, mediums and processes. Mansoor was an eternal river of knowledge for the young artists and art students of Karachi. As a young artist himself, he was also discovering the creative universe that lived within him. He was learning how much he enjoyed teaching and transferring his knowledge of art to others.

The young struggling sisters could see what an important asset he was for their school, so they soon asked him to lead their school. Sharing a common mission to spread knowledge about the arts, Mansoor was moved by their struggle and dedication. He was more than happy to help out the sisters. So he decided to stay in Karachi instead of returning back to Bengal as he originally planned.

Hajra (far left) and Rabia (3rd from right) with their art students walk along the Arabian Sea - Karachi, 1963



In a rented room in the school building, he found a little peaceful sanctuary where he could dive into his crazy world of arts, and also transform the tiny school into a major art institute. He worked tirelessly for the school. Officially, he was the school's principal but he also taught, lectured and mentored students. Soon he, Hajra and Rabia became a strong team and took their school to new heights.

At the same time, the young Bengali artist was busy doing hit art shows, one after another. His name and popularity started spreading throughout West Pakistan and people started knowing him as the Rahi. He began making regular appearances in newspapers, television and radio.

Soon after, Rahi invited Shakir Ali, an eminent artist from Lahore, to visit his school in Karachi. Shakir Ali visited the school and was impressed by what he saw there. Upon Shakir Ali's suggestion, the school's name was changed from Mina Art School to Karachi School of Arts. The school also earned its affiliation from the Sind Technical Board of Education, and was then able to award nationally recognized diplomas to their students. This was a major success for them and especially for their students.

Rahi's greatest mentor, Zainul Abedin, visited him several times in Karachi. He was proud of Rahi and his successes. Being one of his favorite students, Zainul Abedin wanted Rahi to settle down in West Pakistan and become a beacon of modern arts, spreading it as far as possible. It was Zainul Abedin who suggested that Rahi propose to Hajra, seeing her great talents and potential.

For a wild, young Bengali man, however, marrying a traditional Urdu girl would not be that simple. Hajra's Urdu family, who came from Lucknow India with Arabian and Persian roots, were initially strictly opposed to the union. Many members of her family spoke and wrote fluent Persian with traditional Urdu as their native language. With very different values and culture, bringing a dark-skinned Bengali man into their family as one of their own seemed pretty far-fetched.

However, when Hajra's mother -- a graceful yellow-eyed, light skinned lady -- met Rahi, she surprisingly liked his strong and disciplined personality. She would give the couple permission to marry, but under a few conditions. First, Rahi would have to learn to speak the Urdu language. Second, he would need to build his own house in Karachi. And third, he must promise to always stay true to her beautiful daughter and vow to always take good care of her.

Rahi agreed to the conditions and promised to fulfill all of them. It took him a few years, but he was able to build a house and learn the language just good enough to pass his mother-in-law's language test. Rahi and Hajra got married in 1969 and formed a special bond to last forever. A relationship based on love, friendship, mutual respect and technical learnings, achieving great milestones and the highest level of success in their field.



Rahi and Hajra wedding - Karachi, 1968



Karachi, 1969

— A BOND FOREVER —



Khanpur, 2017

Rahi's contributions in shaping the Karachi art scene were unmatched. Karachi was home to several big names in the industry, but none gave birth to such massive art movements as Rahi. He single-handedly interjected modern arts on a massive scale, giving birth to an entire generation of modernists who grew to be masters themselves in later generations.

Rahi pioneered the spontaneous use of watercolors, not only in landscapes but also in cityscapes and figurative styles. His teachings disseminated on a much wider scale than any other, because he was a social speaker who didn't require any notes or prompts. He would simply give extempore speeches. He played a key role in changing the way Karachiites perceived the arts. In fact, he changed the culture. Instead of



Rahi with his first child Saima - Karachi, 1974

Rahi's career kept growing steadily, just as Hajra joined hands with him in marriage. Together they did several shows and commissions in Karachi. Rahi was even sent to Tokyo, Japan to represent Pakistan, but Rahi's heart always pulled him towards the great Pakish mountains in the north. He dreamed about the mountains and visited them with his students as often as he could. Many affluent businessmen, TV and film stars and celebrities spent time at his house in Karachi.



Rahi observes Hajra in her studio as she polishes her unique watercolor techniques - Karachi, 1976

Whether he was participating in exhibitions or doing his own shows, socializing with the public soon become a daily routine. But Rahi was slowly becoming tired of the glamorous city life of Karachi, with all the usual business, politics, crazy work hours



Rahi with fellow artists - Tokyo Japan, 1982

and hyper competitive environment. He could feel his spiritual side being compromised, which was like oxygen for him. He knew that he had moved away from nature and was getting more and more entangled with the urban lifestyle. This was not for him, for he knew his destiny lie elsewhere and that he must make his move soon.

- MOVING NORTH -

In 1981, soon after Rahi came back from his show in Japan, he received a call from the vice chancellor of the Peshawar University in Peshawar. The vice chancellor requested that Rahi head their fine arts department. Rahi had already become desperate to move north and jumped on the opportunity, and so he and his young family moved to Peshawar.

Upon his arrival in the historical heartland of the Pashtoons, he was surprised to learn that Zainul Abedin -- his dear, former teacher and mentor -- had established the Department of Fine Arts at the university years ago. But now in shambles, they wanted Rahi to resurrect the department and take it to new heights and Rahi was honored to take on the role.

The vice chancellor of the university, a gracefully aged statuesque Pashtoon told Rahi, "Our people here are used to holding guns in their hands, we want you to replace those guns with paintbrushes". The old man had a beautiful vision and Rahi made it his mission. Working diligently on his new goal, Rahi revamped the entire layout of the art education.

He thoughtfully taught his students about the principles of modern thinking as well as the latest art techniques and processes, in an attempt to change the way they looked at and appreciated the arts. He played a key role in promoting the artists of Peshawar and the surrounding areas. He also promoted the Abasin Arts Council, a local organization whose mission was to promote design and the arts.



*Professor Rahi in class with his students - Department of Fine Art
Peshawar University - Peshawar, 1982*

In less than two years, he was able to restructure the department and successfully produced several young artists. However, Rahi's goal had always been to settle down in Islamabad.



*The final student's exhibition before Rahi's move to Islamabad - Rahi is seen with his Peshawar University students
Abasin Art Council - Peshawar, 1983*

He always adored the city because of its beauty, modern design and close proximity to the mountains. Once satisfied with his progress at the university, he dug up his heels to make the move he waited years for. But before leaving Peshawar, he held a special exhibition of the best of his young artists. He invited major dignitaries and the vice chancellor to the exhibition. On the exhibition stage, those young artists held paintbrushes in their hands. This exhibition fulfilled his mission and his promise.

- LEAP OF THE BENGAL TIGER -

Rahi was finally able to move to his favorite city, Islamabad, in 1983. Driving the historical Grand Trunk Road (that stretches from Kolkata to Kabul) in their trusty little 1971 Volkswagen Beetle, with no air-conditioning and a weighty old cassette player running on six large battery cells, playing a strange combination of Abba, Bee Gees, Ghulam Ali and Gary Davis numbers, Rahi, Hajra, and their two little ones arrived in the romantic city of Islamabad.

The first few years were no bed of roses, but the young family stuck together. Renting a small portion in a little house in Islamabad, Rahi started painting like a superhero. He used to say, "Look at me, I work like a Gin (genie)" and work he did, painting through days and nights. But Hajra was never far behind, painting vigorously herself. The two were determined to stay and settle down in their beloved city.



Rahi Looks North - 1982



Rahi with his trusty 1971 Volkswagen Beetle with the cassette player visible on the rooftop - Northern Pakistan, 1982

It must be noted that Islamabad was a very young city at that time, unlike major metropolises like Karachi, Lahore or Dhaka. The innocent little capital Islamabad had no professional art stores and art supplies were scarce. This was a major hurdle for art professionals like Rahi and Hajra. They prepared the canvases at home, stretching the canvas by hand, hammering it down on the

wooden frames and applying a thick glue-like chemical that had to be boiled for hours on the stove and need to be stirred constantly. This job was usually delegated to one of the children, who energetically joined into the whole preparation process. They treated their colors like their most precious treasures, and hundreds of different shades were prepared with just a few basic colors and saved in airtight tubes for later use.

Such an environment also served great opportunities for Rahi and Hajra. The fresh city was after all the capital of Pakistan, poised for a takeoff as the "Heart of Asia." It was the crossroads of the developing world, connecting China, India, Central Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan's armed forces, government offices, public sectors, foreign missions and embassies were all settling in.

This was a turning point in Rahi's life. There could not have been a better match than him and his newly adopted city. It was as if both were just waiting to meet each other. Numerous major projects were sprouting all around him and demand for all types of creative ideas and artworks -- including paintings, murals, sculptures and monuments -- was growing. During the mid 1980s and 1990s, Rahi took on many major commissioned projects, requiring him to paint hundreds of paintings, massive murals and monuments. Many of the key government and army buildings now proudly displayed his work. His work not only spread throughout the public, but also grew popular in the private sector as he rose to new heights of recognition and fame. Rahi moved his family to a spacious house in Islamabad and was also able to import the finest art materials from Japan and Europe for his exceptional works.



*A senior government official opens Rahi's exhibition in the capital city
Rahi (left) and Director General, Pakistan National Council of the Arts, Khalid Saeed Butt (right) - Islamabad, 1985*

This was also the time when Rahi started the work on his world-famous period of Rayonistic Cubo Formalism and his shows began traveling around the globe. Under the

leadership of Khalid Saeed Butt, the PNCA (Pakistan National Council of the Arts) in Islamabad arranged many successful shows for Rahi. He was also sent to England, France and Germany during this period to represent Pakistan and present his work to the world with group and solo shows, interviews and lectures throughout Europe.

Rahi had his Silver Jubilee show in 1987, which was jointly organized by the Al-Hamra Art Center and PNCA in both Islamabad and Lahore, celebrating twenty-five years of his achievements. He also received the prestigious Shakir Ali Award in 1987.

Rahi became a household name in the late 80s when he started his popular TV show on Pakistan Television, Daily Morning Transmission. Being the only channel in the country at the time, almost every single household watched it with excitement. The show was geared towards a younger crowd and aired live in the morning hours, at a time when the children and young adults were getting ready for school or college. It was a must-watch show with live critiques, painting demonstrations and interviews of established painters. He also had prize giveaways for the best drawings that children would send in to him from all over the country. During the peak of its popularity, it became nearly impossible for Rahi to walk on the streets without giving out a few autographs to his growing fan base.



Rahi with host Mustansar Hussain Tarar during his popular TV Show Bare Funkar (Big Talents) - Pakistan Television (PTV) - The only TV broadcast in the country at that time - Islamabad, 1989

In the following years to come, Rahi conceived several legendary periods in 2000 and beyond. His shows continued to amaze art lovers around the world. Since 2007 onwards, he has done multiple shows in the U.S. where he would spend his time sketching, drawing and painting his thoughts away.

Rahi received the highest presidential award, The Pride of Performance, in 2008 for his legendary achievements, which was conferred upon him by the president of Pakistan at the time, Pervaiz Musharraf. Rahi celebrated his Golden Jubilee show in 2009, celebrating half-a-century of his work where he exhibited paintings throughout his periods of evolution from 1957 till 2007. The show was organized by PNCA in Islamabad. Now ready for his Diamond Jubilee mega-show, he cannot remember the number of awards and prizes he has been honored with, since there are so many.

In 2015, Rahi visited Dhaka Art College to pay homage to his great mentors. He was greeted with intense emotions and excitement by the staff and faculty. He stepped into the office of late Zainul Abedin and embraced his mentor's chair, where he used to sit.

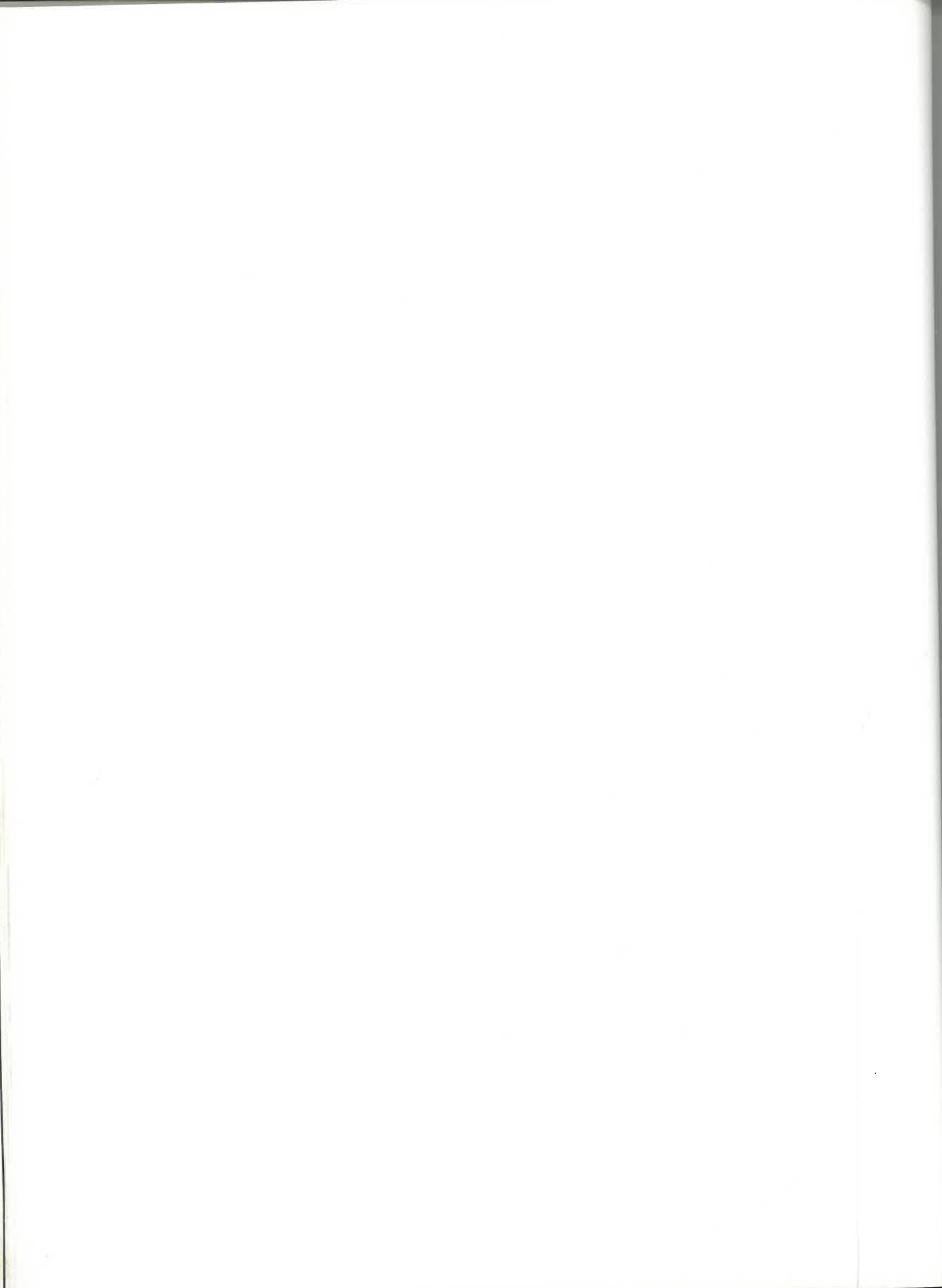


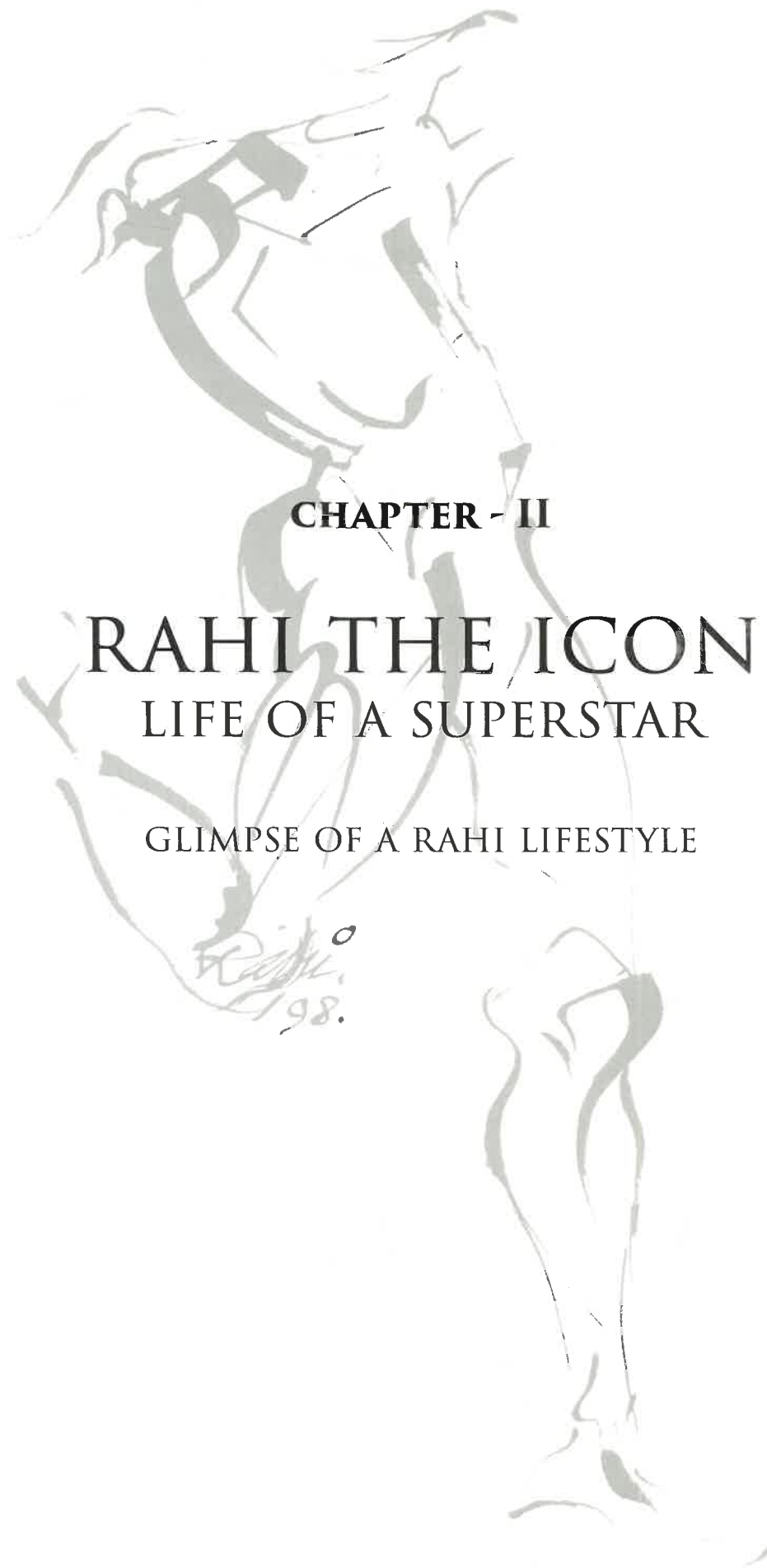
Rahi visits the principal office of his teacher and mentor Zainul Abedin at Dhaka Art College - now in use by the current principal - Zainul Abedin's portrait is visible behind the chair - Dhaka Bangladesh, 2016

Rahi and Hajra never stopped teaching the arts. In fact, their presence in Islamabad draws many art lovers, admirers and art-hungry students to them. No one leaves without gaining some gift of pure wisdom from the two. Their house in Islamabad has slowly turned into a sanctuary for aspiring artists. They still live in Islamabad, near the beautiful Margala Hills, where they continue to paint and teach the arts.



Wild Horse - Charcoal on Paper
Rahi sketches away as his followers surround him to observe
Peshawar University - Peshawar, 2017





CHAPTER - II

RAHI THE ICON
LIFE OF A SUPERSTAR

GLIMPSE OF A RAHI LIFESTYLE





Rahi with friends, Hajra and known Indian writer Javed Akhter (Jadoo) (center) during an evening with poets and writers - Karachi, 1965



*Rahi's residence, with senior government officials
Young Rahi (left) presenting mural concepts for the Governor House - Karachi, 1972*



*Rahi's residence - During a documentary shooting
Famous Pakish director & writer Shoeb Mansoor on camera - Karachi, 1975*



Rahi and Hajra with friends, Midway Hotel (PIA) - Karachi, 1978



Hajra vigorously presenting Rahi to General Zia-ul-Haq, the president of Pakistan at the time - Karachi, 1982



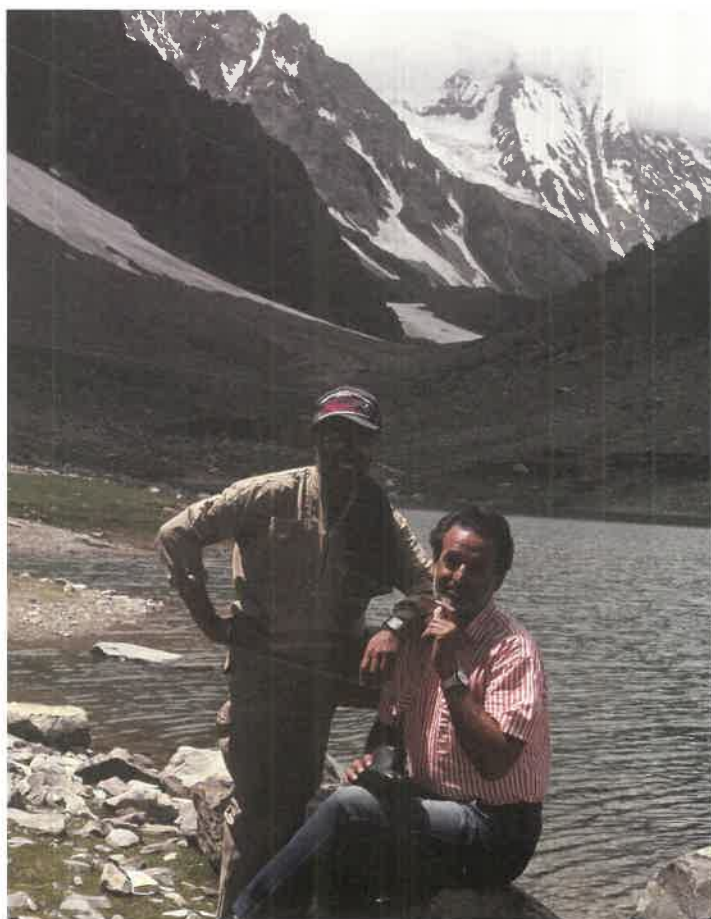
Rahi receives the honorable National Award by President General Zia-ul-Haq - Karachi, 1982



Rahi & Hajra with a dear friend and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gohar Ayub Khan - Islamabad, 1998



Rahi & Hajra with Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz and his wife - Prime Minister House - Islamabad, 2005



*Rahi with dear friend & renowned writer Mustansar Hussain Tarer
On route to Nanga Parbat (The Naked Mountain) - Fairy Meadows, Gilgit-Baltistan, 1990*



*Rahi with an American abstract expressionist painter Lee Kaloidis
(Lee's studio) - New Hope, Pennsylvania, 2010*



*Rahi with his wife Hajra and her sister, Rabia Zubairi, also a renowned artist and art educationist
- Murree Resort, 2013*



*Rahi with art teachers and professors at the Dhaka Art College
- Dhaka Bangladesh, 2015*



The National Award - 1982



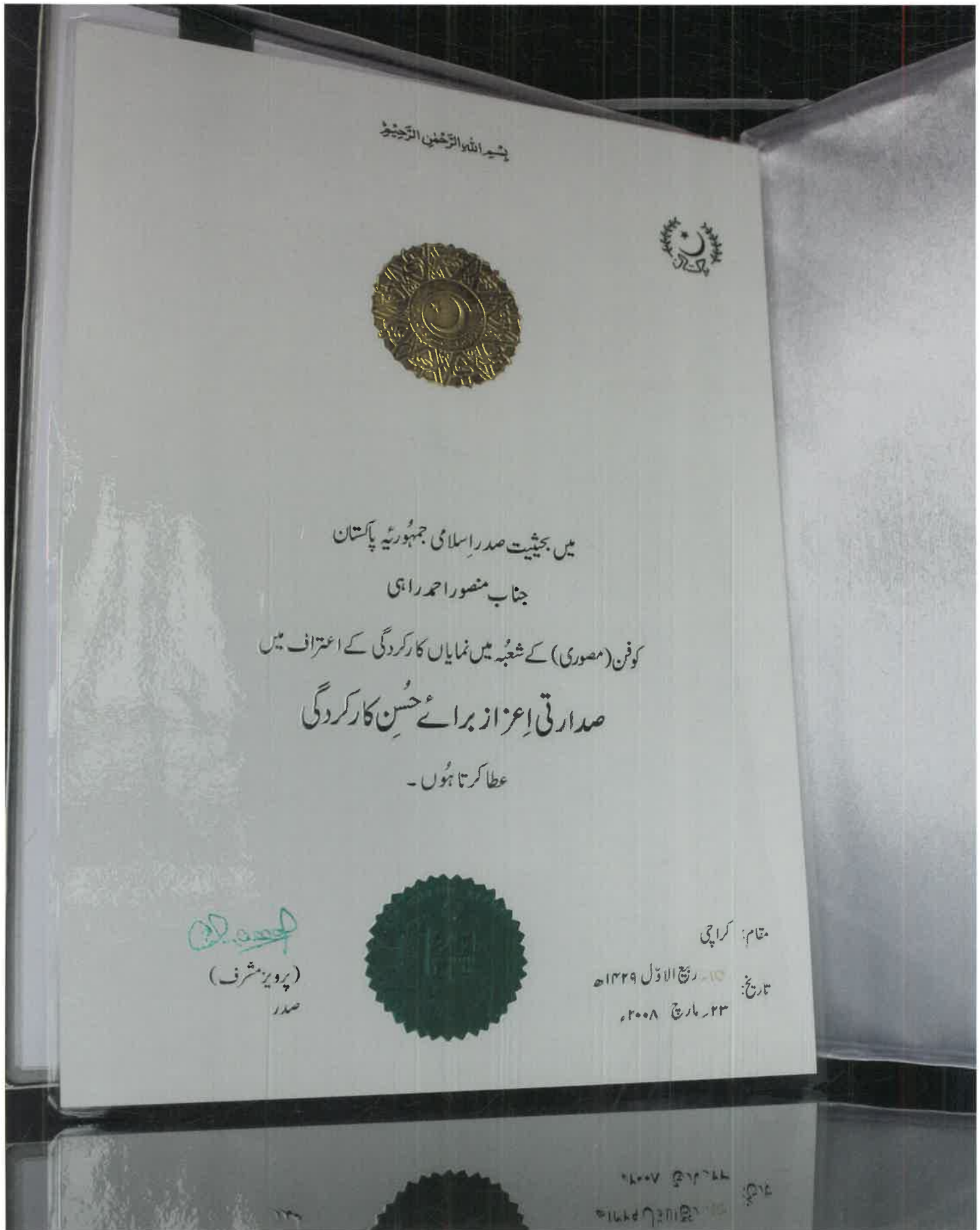
The First Art Biennale - Pakistan National Council of the Arts - Islamabad, 1987



The Shakir Ali Award - Lahore, 1987



Lifetime Achievement Award - Presented by the Karachi School of Arts - Karachi, 2004



The honorable Pride-of-Performance Award presented by the President of Pakistan
President General Pervaiz Musharraf - Islamabad, 2008



*The highest Presidential Award conferred by the President of Pakistan
President General Pervaiz Musharraf - Islamabad, 2008*



*Lifetime Achievement Award - Presented by the Rawalpindi Art Council
in association with the Royal Norway Embassy - Rawalpindi, 2010*



*Gold trophy awarded by the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology
- Rawalpindi, 2015*



Rahi receiving an award from the Pakistan Army Generals
- Bhurban Resort, 2016



Rahi received countless awards throughout his progressive career that stretches well over half a century



Rahi's persistent demonstrations of modernist ideas & cutting edge skills played a commendable role in exposing the scope & elegance of eastern modernistic vision & capacity to the Western world - 1968



Rahi surprises & woos foreign diplomats with a quick outdoor display of his modern art exposing little known strengths of the Asian modernists - Karachi 1969



A senior government official opening Rahi's show
Khalid Saeed Butt, DG, PNCA (on right). Ghulam Rasool, artist/director, PNCA (left back) - Islamabad, 1980



Rahi played a key role in bridging the Eastern & the Western vision for the free world.
He steadily educated the leadership of the developing world on various fronts rejuvenating their minds
by interjecting fresh & mind-altering modern concepts - Islamabad, 1980



Rahi presenting his work to the State Minister for National Health Services during his **Silver Jubilee Show**
Al-Hamra Center - Lahore, 1987



Rahi presenting his work to the President of Pakistan, Wasim Sajjad
- Islamabad, 1997



Rahi with his wife Hajra and the Ambassador of Argentina Rodolfo Martin - Saravia (right) during the opening of Rahi's **Golden Jubilee Show** Arts and Crafts Village - Islamabad, 2012



Rahi with his wife Hajra (center) and renowned artist/actor Jamal Shah (left) opening a group show National Art Gallery - Islamabad, 2017



Rahi speaking at the Radio Pakistan - Karachi, 1979



*Rahi keynote speech at the Karachi Arts Council
- Karachi, 1982*



*Rahi keynote speech at the Karachi School of Arts
- Karachi, 1988*



Rahi keynote speech at Punjab University - Lahore, 1995



Rahi keynote speech at Peshawar University - Peshawar, 2017



Senior writer Sheen Farrukh & Rahi, a budding star, engage in a deep dialog as Sheen interviews Rahi at the event: An evening with Rahi - Karachi, 1974



Younger Rahi with modernist painter Ahmed Pervez (left) and writer Sheen Farrukh (right) - Karachi, 1974



Rahi on a TV show with a fellow budding superstar Perveen Shakir - Karachi, 1979



Rahi keeps the audience engaged as the legendary poet Perveen Shakir & host Khushbakht Shujaat listen. Pakistan Television (PTV). The only TV channel in Pakistan at the time - Karachi, 1979



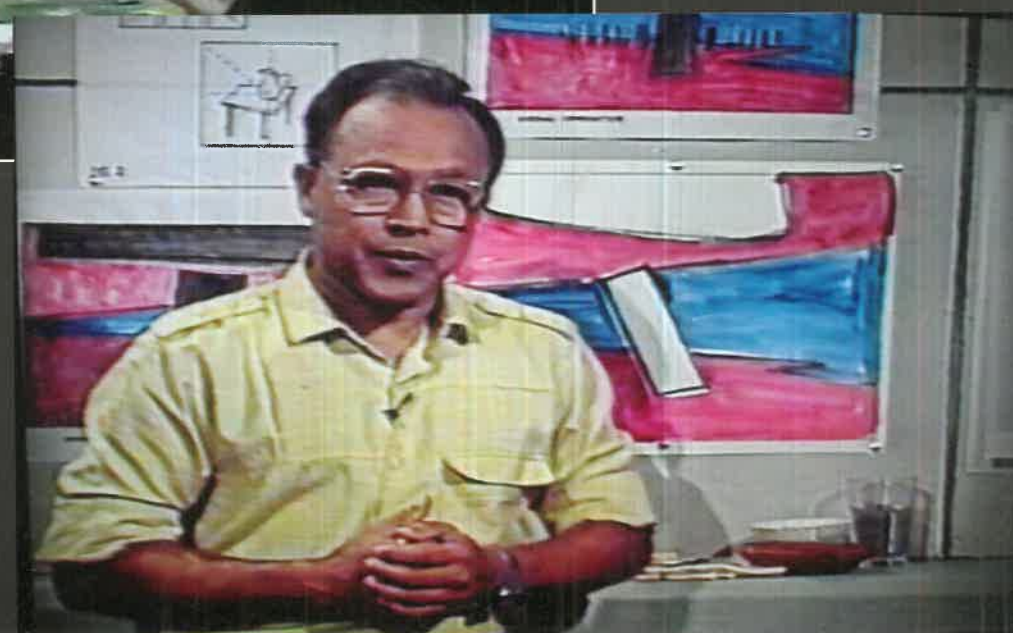
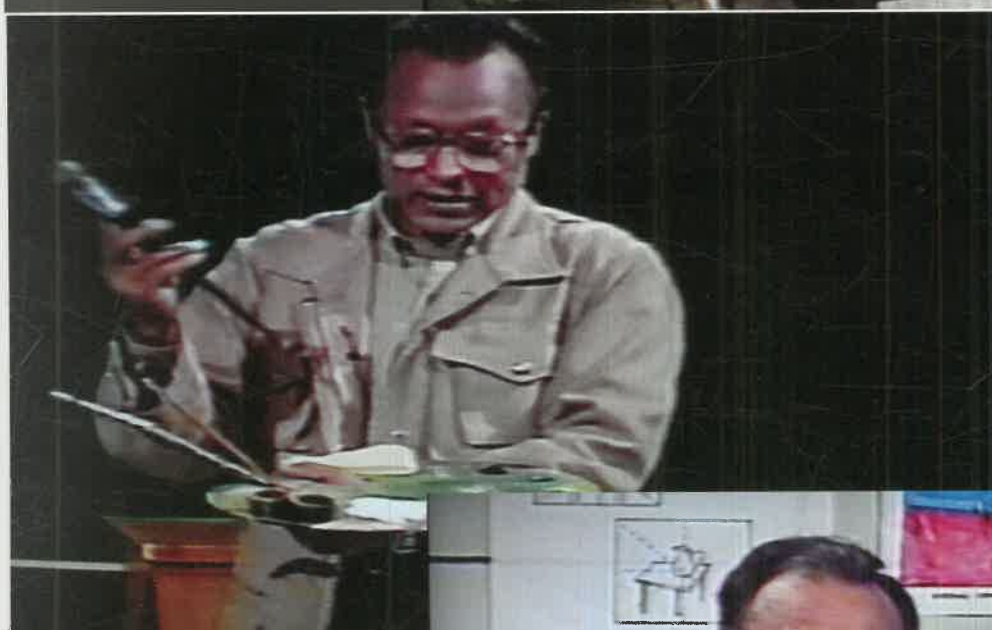
Bare Funkar

Rahi's Famous LIVE TV show
on Pakistan Television (PTV)

Host:
Mustansar Hussain Tarer
Qurat-Ul-Ain Ali

1985 - 1997

Screen-Grabs







Rahi & Hajra on an entertaining morning talk show - Hum TV, 2007



Rahi amusing the audience during PTV Golden Jubilee celebrations live transmission on Pakistan Television - 2014



Rahi TV show recording - Dhaka Bangladesh 2016

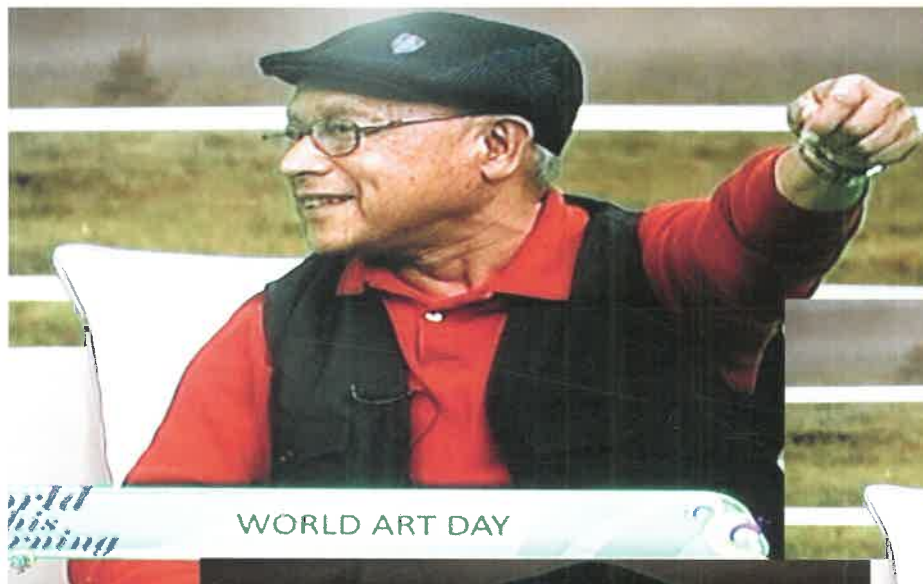


Rahi listening to his own interview on TV at his residence - Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2016

Rahi & Hajra during an engaging TV interview on the show "Sky Is The Limit" on PTV World - 2014

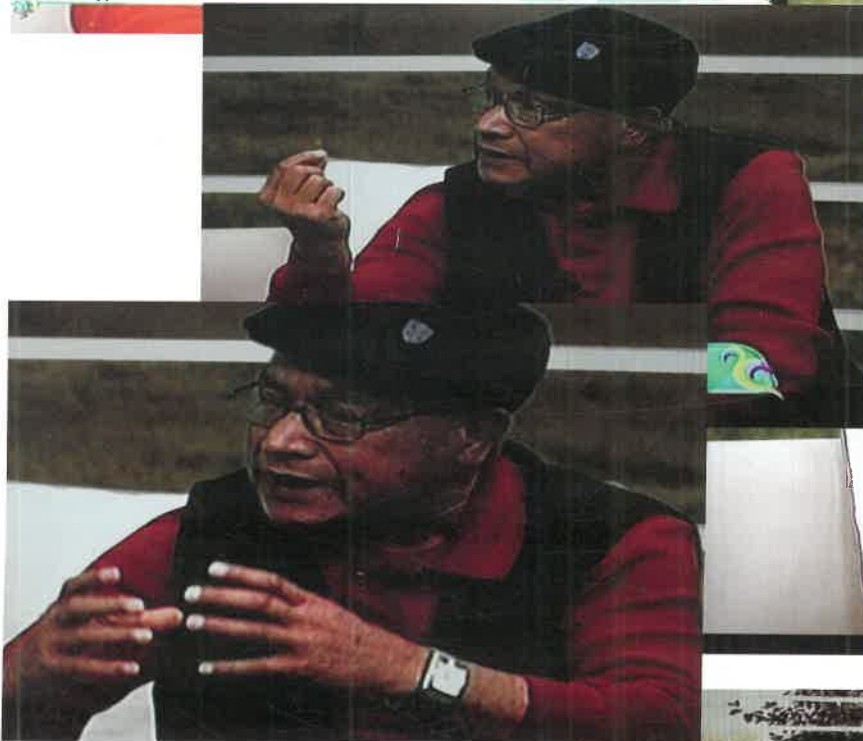
Screen-Grabs





Rahi with his wife Hajra entertaining millions around the world on the "World Art Day"

PTV World - LIVE Broadcast
2016
Screen-Grabs





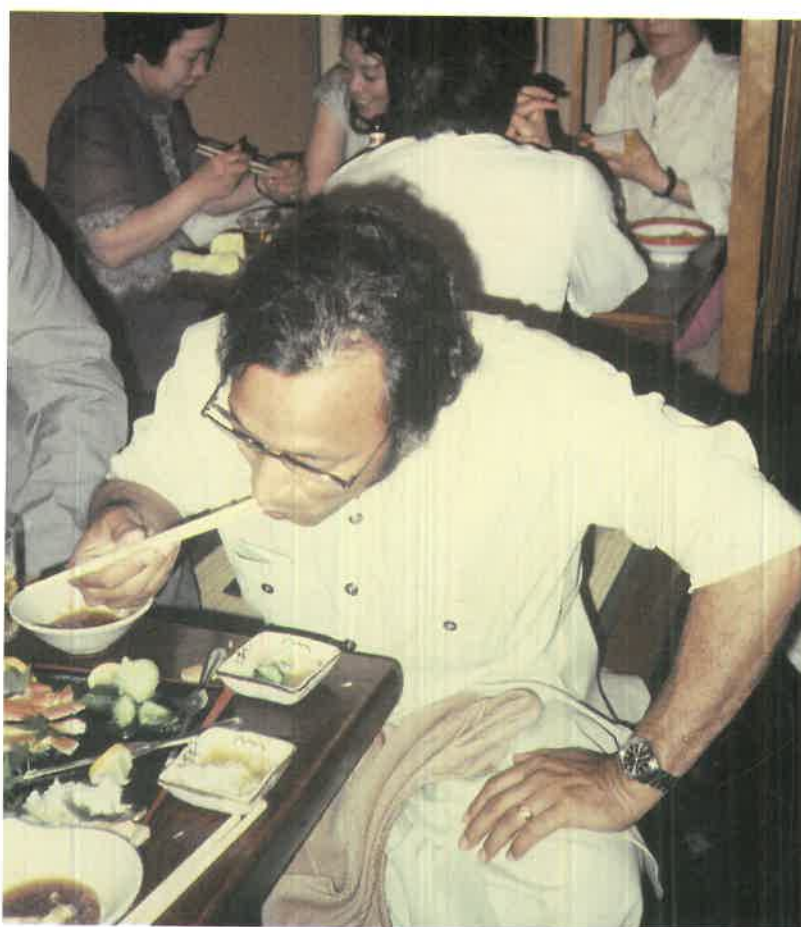
Japan warmly receives Rahi at the Narita International Airport - Tokyo Japan, 1982



Rahi in traditional Pakish outfit (Shalwar Kamiz) proudly represents Pakistan - Tokyo Japan, 1982



Rahi with his Japanese friend & artist Takashi on Mount Fuji - Highest mountain in Japan with an active stratovolcano - Honshu Island, Japan, 1982



Rahi learns chopsticks while experiencing traditional Japanese food - Tokyo Japan, 1982



Exploring one of the largest collection of modern and contemporary art in the world at the National Museum of Modern Art - Paris, 1987

Through the maze of galleries at the Musée National d'Art Moderne (National Museum of Modern Art)



Next to Henry Moore's Bronze reclining figure - Paris

Sitting next to Pablo Picasso's famous sculpture 'The Goat' at the Picasso Museum - Paris





Rahi spent months studying modern art & Pablo Picasso at
the Picasso Museum in Paris
He often spend hours sitting and thinking on the museum steps
The Hôtel Salé, The Musée Picasso Paris, 1987





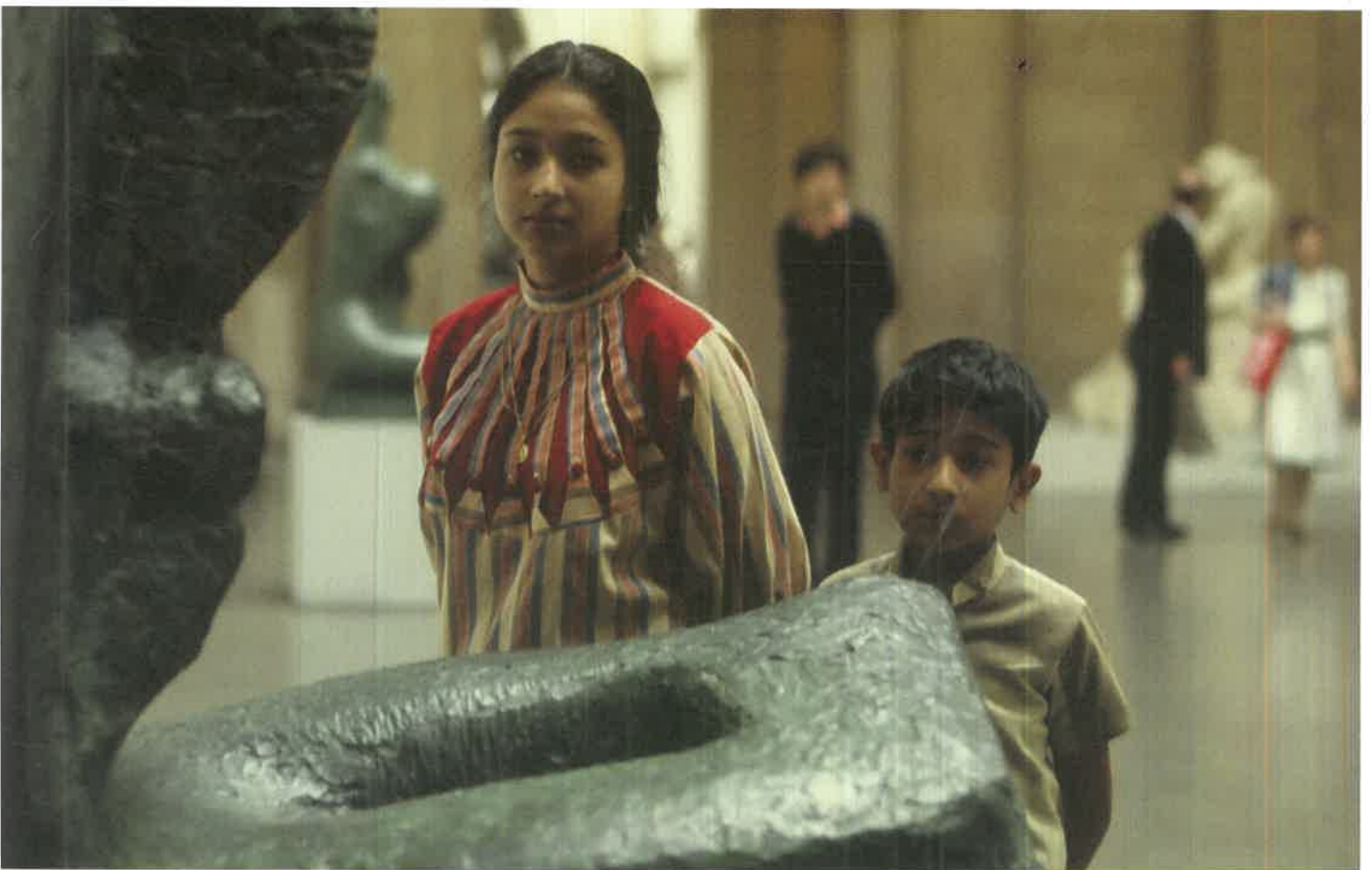
At the Stravinsky Fountain by artists Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely - near Centre Pompidou, Paris, France



L'Araignée Rouge (The Red Spider) - by American sculptor Alexander Calder - La Defense, Courbevoie, France



At the famous Centre Georges Pompidou (the Pompidou Centre) - Beaubourg, Paris



*On many occasions Rahi traveled with his children, exposing them to the artistic wonders of the world
The Musée du Louvre (The Louvre Museum - world's largest with over 70,000 pieces of art) - Paris*



Rahi at his brother's house in London - From left: Rahi's brother, Rahi, niece, sister-in-law & her sister - London 1989



Rahi's little studio - London UK, 1989



Exploring England's countryside - UK 1989



Exploring England's countryside - UK 1989



Rahi with Pakish Ambassador & German excellencies during his reception - Bonn, Germany, 1992



Rahi during a press interview at his exhibition - Bonn Germany, 1992



Rahi speaking at his show - Bonn - Germany, 1992



Rahi during a press interview at his exhibition - Bonn Germany, 1992



At times mesmerized by what he saw, Rahi would sit down on the gallery floors to connect with the work on almost a spiritual level.
Museum Ludwig, Cologne Germany

Rahi observing Franz Gertsch ~
Marina Making up Luciano 1975.
Museum Ludwig, Cologne Germany



Rahi spent countless days on the floors of various art galleries in Germany - studying various forms of fine art.

Rahi not only studied modern art but also various other periods including the work of old masters





Rainy day on the streets of Bonn,
Bad Godesberg - Germany

With friends - Bonn-Bad Godesberg
near Rhine river - Germany



A beautiful evening with friends in
Bonn, Bad Godesberg - Germany

On the Drachenfelsbahn, an electric
cog-railway. On route to the
Drachenfels, a popular excursion
spot - Königswinter, Germany





With artist Hans Hayden Ham and his wife - Düsseldorf, Germany



Rahi during his exhibition - Bonn Germany



Thinking at one of countless brainstorming meetings with his friends at a Konditorei (German Cafe')

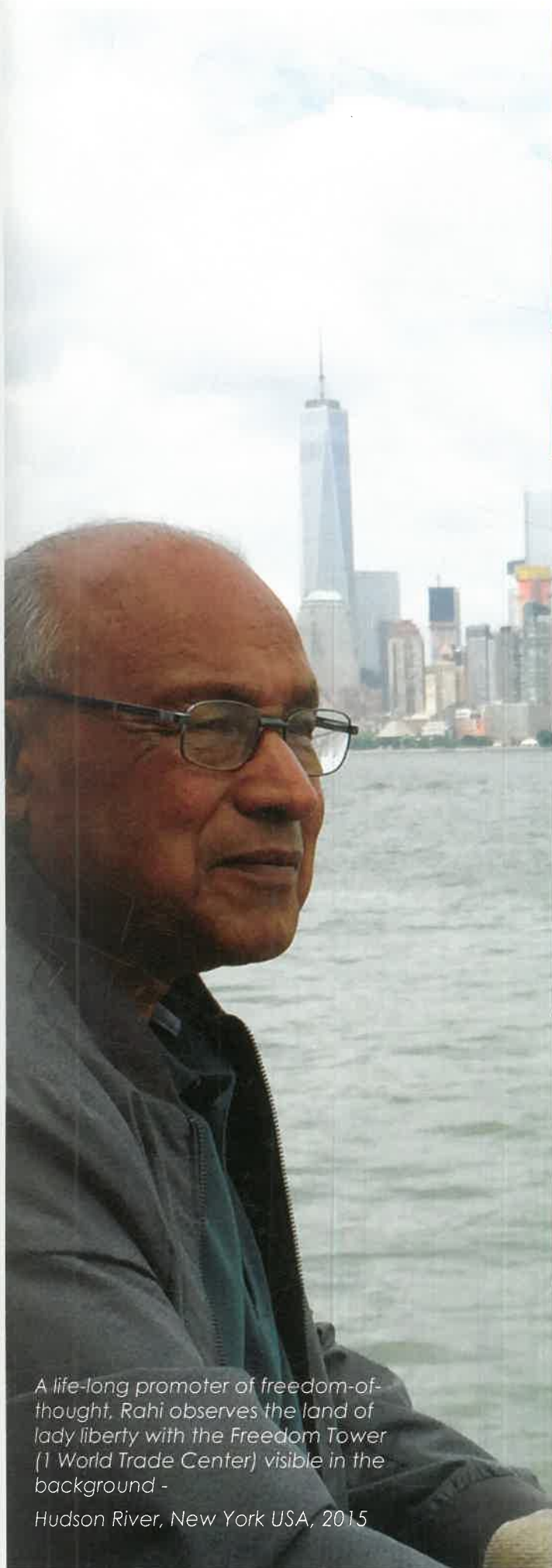
Rahi spent many days with his Turkish friends in Germany, exchanging thoughts & knowledge



Sometimes after a long day of exploring art galleries, Rahi would spend his evenings at local German restaurants

Rahi's little studio in Germany





A life-long promoter of freedom-of-thought, Rahi observes the land of lady liberty with the Freedom Tower (1 World Trade Center) visible in the background -

Hudson River, New York USA, 2015

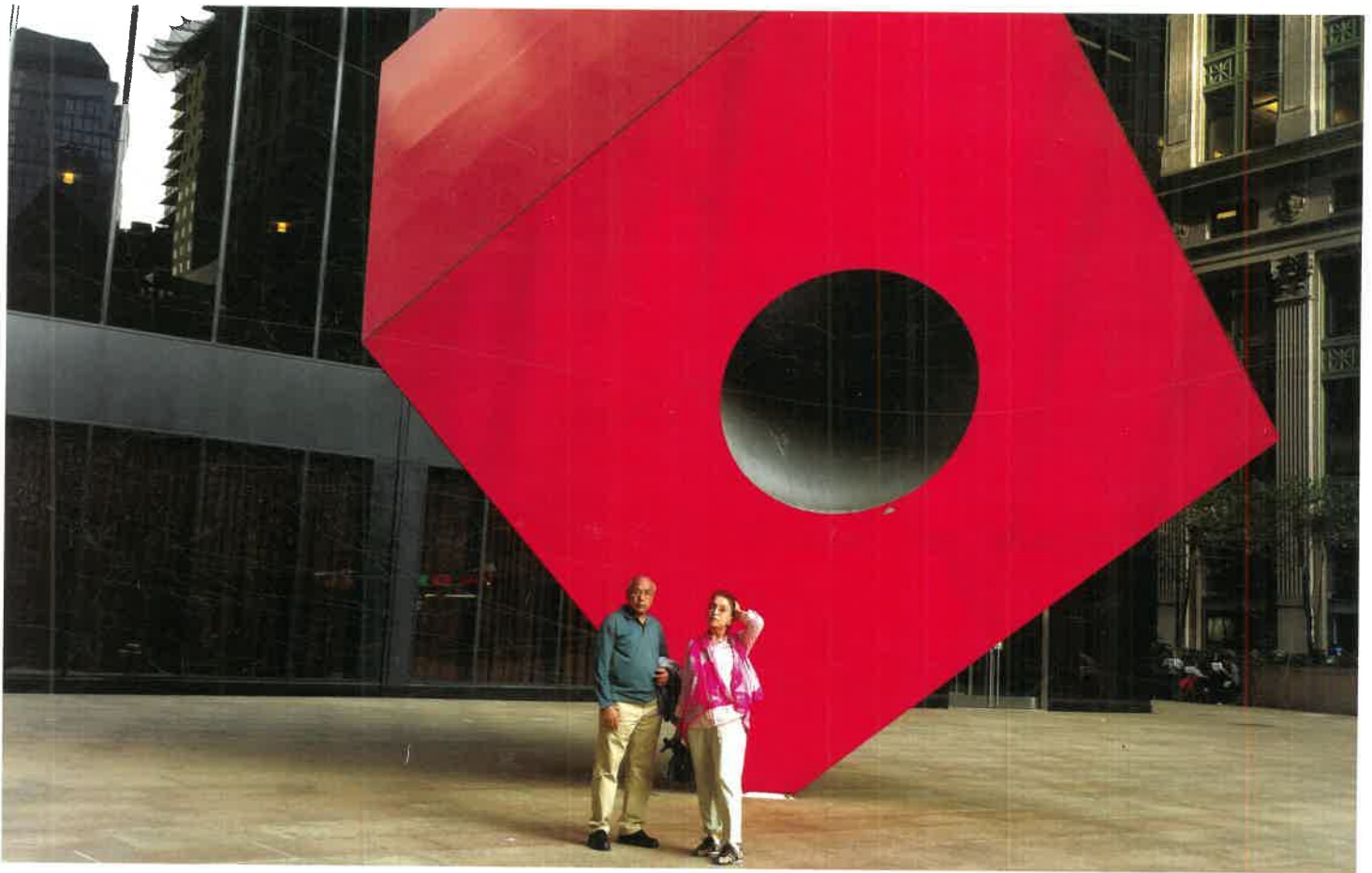


Rahi during a TV show recording - New Jersey, 2010



Rahi during a TV show recording - Pennsylvania, 2010





*Rahi & Hajra next to the public art known as "The Red Cube" by American artist Isamu Noguchi
- Broadway, New York, NY, USA, 2015*



*Rahi & Hajra next to the massive sculpture "Group of Four Trees" by French sculptor Jean Dubuffet
- New York, NY, USA, 2015*



Rahi with his son - Manhattan,
New York City, USA, 2000

Rahi with family at a carnival -
Pocono Mountains - Pennsylvania,
USA, 2010



Rahi with his daughter Saima -
Connecticut, USA, 2015

Rahi with his life-long friend & wife
Hajra - Taking a smoothy break from
a day of walking around - Wall Street,
New York, USA, 2015





Rahi at his residence in Hamilton,
New Jersey, USA, 2010

Rahi takes a call while traveling
around New Jersey, USA, 2010



Painting away for his American fans
& followers - Rahi sometimes uses
wrist support (visible in this image)
due to stress from over half-a-century
of painting - Connecticut, USA, 2015

Rahi on a shopping spree -
Fifth Avenue - New York City,
USA, 2015





Rahi sending his work overseas - Director PNCA Musarrat Naheed (right) with helpers - Islamabad, 1988



Rahi receiving his work in Frankfurt, Germany, 1988



On route to London - 1989



On route to New York - 2015

A full-page photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a person wearing a dark jacket, pants, and a helmet is walking down a rocky, scree-covered slope. They are holding a long wooden staff or pole. To their right, a dark-colored pack animal, possibly a mule or donkey, is also descending the slope, carrying large black packs with red accents. The background features steep, rocky mountain peaks with patches of snow or ice, under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

CHAPTER - III

THE ONE WHO SPREAD CUBISM
IN THE HIMALAYAS

THE ONE WHO SPREAD CUBISM IN THE HIMALAYAS

It was one sunny afternoon in the year 1964 when young Rahi, traveling in a traditional Pakish bus somewhere near the majestic mountains of Kaghan (Northern Pakistan), suddenly jumped out the bus window and started shouting at the top of his lungs. The bus was occupied mostly by local Pash-toons, who could not understand a single word of the Bengali language. A few of them quickly jumped off the bus to help, pulling the young Bengali man back inside and securing him back in his seat. The excited Rahi kept trying to explain what he just saw, but the utterly confused Pashtoon passengers just kept trying to comfort him and calm him down.



Kaghan Valley - 1970

This was the first time Rahi had ever seen snow on the mountains. The majestic snow-caps on the great Himalayas shined like diamonds from hundreds of miles away. Rahi found them rather welcoming.

For next several days, Rahi thought that he was in a trance, for he was totally spell-bound by the magic mountains. For a keen observer and a true lover of nature, whose eyes were tuned only to look at the flat lands, calm tropical rivers and far stretching horizons of Bengal, this was a life-altering experience.

One day, while Rahi was lying down in a forest listening to the Karakoram winds piercing through the sky-scraping pines, their needles whispering the songs of heaven, he noticed a few other soothing sounds. The sounds were of giggling Pashtoon village children, which sounded like chirping birds to Rahi. When he opened his eyes, he found himself surrounded by the children, who stared anxiously at him. The children were debating if he was really alive. As a yoga expert, Rahi could lay still for hours. He then jumped up and quickly made some new friends. In time, Rahi created countless landscapes and paintings there, for his love and magical relationship with the mountains and the people who lived there would last forever.



*Rahi drew on his sketchbook as village children watched in amusement
Astore Valley - Floor elevation - 8500 ft - Gilgit, 1989*

Rahi brought many study trips to the northern areas of Pakistan when he taught at Karachi School of Arts in Karachi, which lasted for almost two decades mostly in the 60s and the 70s. He not only taught students about the arts, but also about nature and geography of these areas. During this time, Rahi was also exploring and learning a lot himself about the land of the giants. After all, he was a Rahi, so exploring, learning and progressing was simply in his blood.

While on these trips with students and other teachers from the Karachi School of Arts, Rahi used to reach Islamabad from Karachi after a long and tiring two-day journey. The group traveled on trains that were air-conditioned only by the dusty winds cracking the old cabin windows. They would then take the old precariously overloaded public buses -- sometimes sitting on the rooftops or hanging on the back -- to reach the mountains.



*Rahi and Hajra with their art students
Northern Pakistan - 1967*



*Photographed by Rahi at an unknown Train Station in Sind
Hajra and her sister Rabia stand in center with their students - On route to the mountains, 1968*

It must be noted that this was a period of struggle for Rahi, the school was in its budding stages and suffered serious financial constraints. Some teachers willingly taught without any salary, while others spent whatever they earned on the school. Since it was the first and only art school in that part of the country, they were determined to keep the school open, as the local arts community depended on it for survival. They shared a mutual love of the arts, as well as the great mission to spread the arts throughout the community. The school's students were mostly from families who were struggling financially, so many of them studied for free, as Rahi refused to turn young talents away due to a lack of funds.

With whatever resources the school and staff had, they would continue making the journey to the great giants - the Himalayas, the Karakorum and the Hindu Kush mountain ranges. Many mountain roads back then were barely drivable and hotels were scarce. But nothing could stop



*Rahi and Hajra (left) with their
students during a trip to the
mountainous Northern areas - 1970*

Rahi from returning to his mountains, time and time again. It was as if there was a calling, a paranormal pull or an inner voice urging him to return to those mystic giants.

Even when his wife Hajra was pregnant with their first child, they made several trips from Karachi to the northern areas of Pakistan. Rahi's son took his first steps under the shadows of the towering mountain pines, at about 7000 ft in the beautiful mountain town of Nathiagali.

Rahi felt the call from the mountains growing inside him more and more. The feeling was so strong that he ended up selling his house, quit his job and left the great southern metropolis of Karachi forever to be close to the giants.



*Rahi and Hajra at Lake Saiful-Muluk
Kaghan Valley - 1971*



*Rahi scans the landscape with his son
Ayubia National Park - Elevation - 9000ft
Near Miranjani - 1979*

Rahi's mountains stood by him as his guardian angels, they never let him down. He excelled in his career as an artist and professor at Peshawar University, earning some lifetime friends and more trips to the mountain that were much closer to him then. In just a year or two, he was able to throw several sold-out shows and settle down in his dream city of Islamabad in the foothills of the baby Himalayas known as the Margalla Hills.

Loyal to his mountains, Rahi visited them more frequently than ever and now he could even admire them while sitting on his rooftop. He continued to organize exhibitions, student trips, ice sculpture competitions and other events all over the northern areas of Pakistan.



Rahi with his family - Ayubia National Park, 1985



Rahi meditates in Fairy Meadows - Gilgit, 1989

His kids would fall asleep in their cozy beds, but often woke up to find themselves riding in a car, thousands of feet up in the snowy mountain ranges. They remember their father chasing the clouds, literally racing with them on the hills.

The Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Himalayan ranges are like family to Rahi. It's no wonder, then, that Rahi's faithful giants defended him on countless occasions. One such moment came in the year 1989, when Rahi was on his way back from a major expedition to the Nanga Parbat base camp. Nanga Parbat (The Naked Mountain), with an elevation of about 27000 ft, stands as one of the highest in the world. It is also known as "The Killer Mountain" due to its deadly terrain. Touching the mountain's base camp required days of walking with low levels of oxygen.



*Rahi and his mountain guide resting outside a cave after a long day of hiking
Deep inside the remote Fairy Meadows - Gilgit, 1989*

On the final leg of the journey, Rahi was scheduled to take a flight back to Islamabad from the Gilgit airport. His longtime friend and teammate Muztansar Hussain Tarrar, a well-known media figure and writer, had left on an earlier flight the day before. Just before the flight, however, he was informed that his seat had been re-booked to someone else. The concerned Rahi chose the path of least resistance, and even though he was extremely tired from his long journey and eager to return to his family, he walked out of the airport. He could feel something strange in the air. It was as if his giants wanted him to miss that flight.

He decided to instead take a nerve-wracking, fifteen-hour long bus ride back to Islamabad. Soon after he



*Rahi with his mountain guides
Astor Valley - Gilgit, 1989*



Crossing a Glacier - Gilgit, 1989

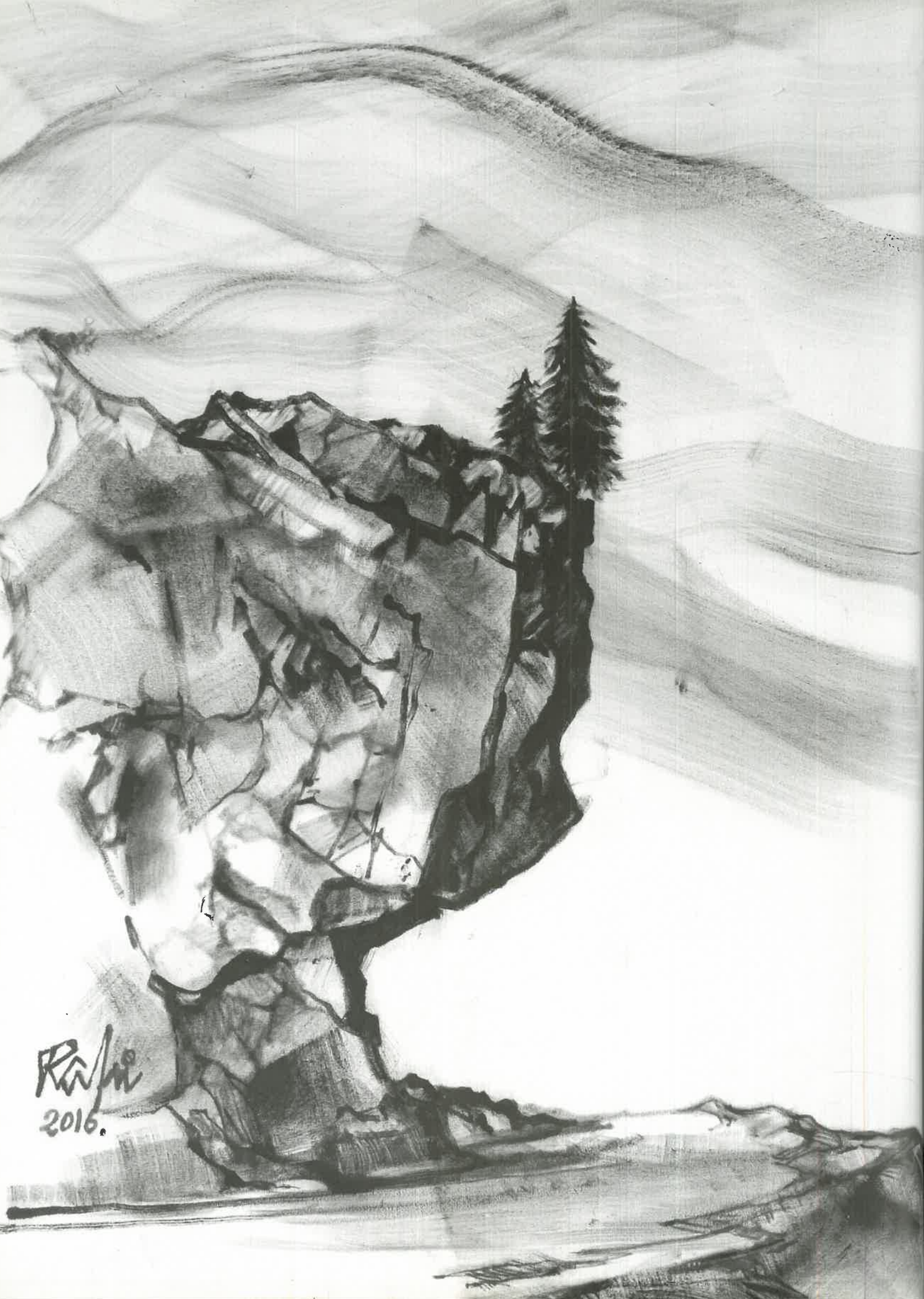
safely arrived home in Islamabad, he learned that the flight he was supposed to be on went missing in the mountains. The search went on for days but the Fokker aircraft -- carrying a total of 54 people including 5 crew-members and 49 passengers -- had vanished in the Himalayan Mountains. The fuselage remains missing to this day.

As a student of nature, Rahi learned a lot from his mountains, including weather forecasting. He learned how to predict the weather, which is usually as accurate as any weather app.

The mountains greatly influenced his work too. He became fascinated with the hidden forms and shapes he saw in these mountains. He slowly developed the unique ability to see figurative articulations -- or maybe it was the giants who were revealing their secrets to him?



The Faces - Series: Resurrect Rock - 2015



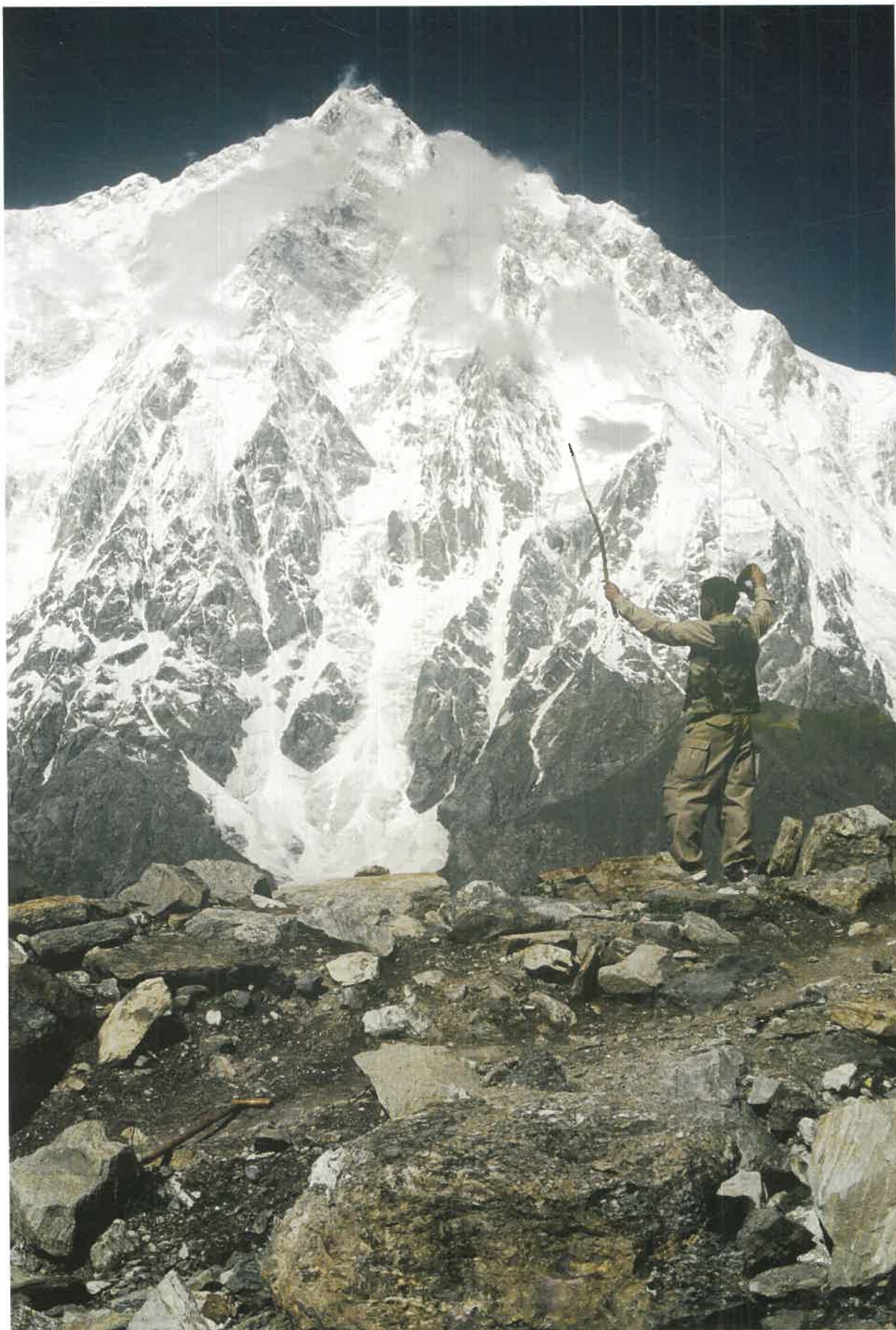
Such mystical observations would later give birth to an entire series of works that Rahi named The Resurrect Rock, a magical fusion of human figures and forms within the massive rock formations, which had been embedded in the mountains for millions of years. The series traveled throughout Europe, China, India and the U.S., earning him great praise worldwide.



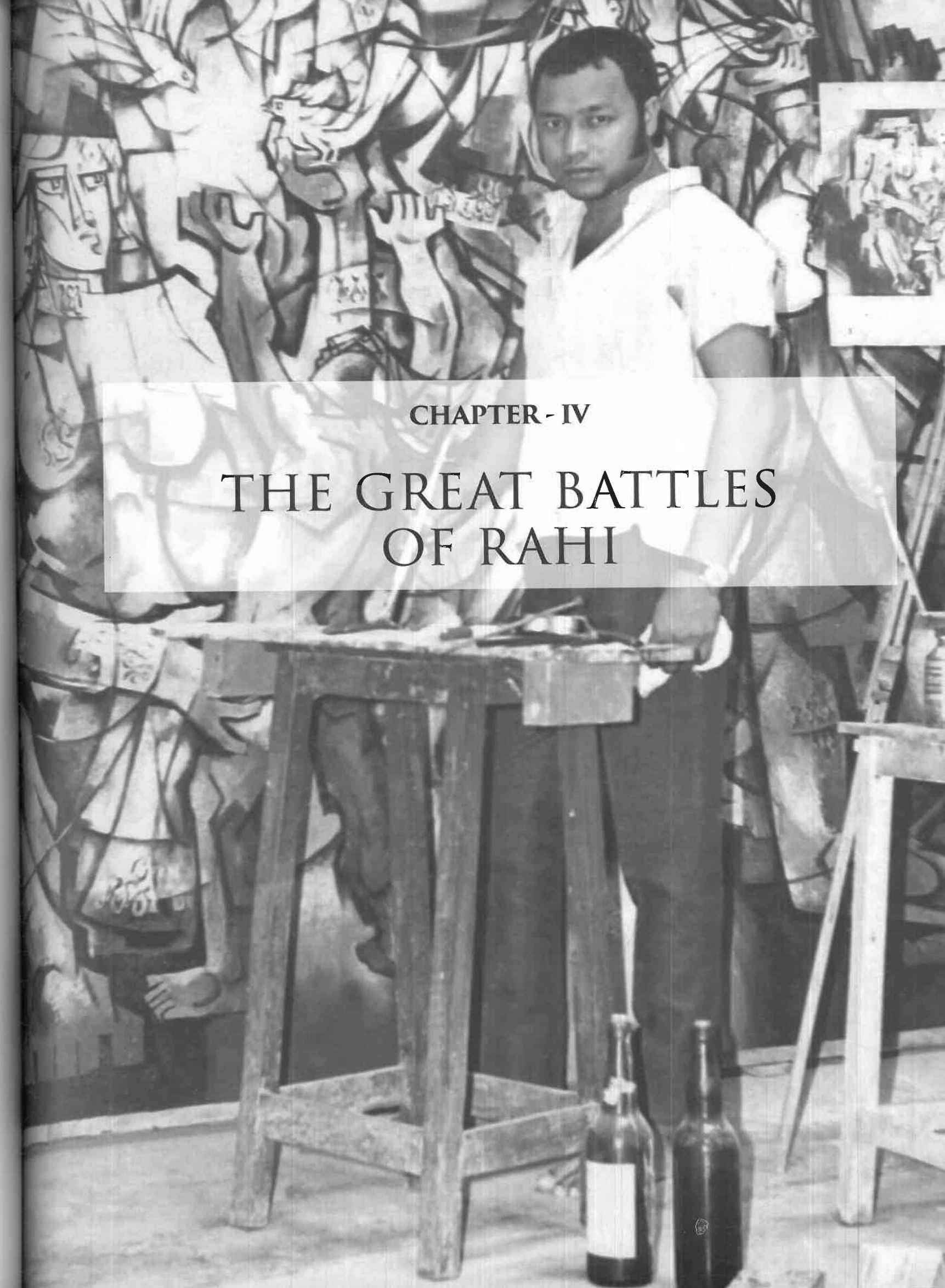
*The beautiful wild flowers of the Heart-of-Asia
Near the remote Tarishing village - Photo Credit: Rahi*

Now in his late 70s Rahi, still visits his faithful mountain giants every single week. Unable to drive himself, he is accompanied by his friends and family. He tells them:

"Whenever you hear the roaring thunder of the Himalayan clouds and the whispering of the sky-scraping Karakoram pines, it will be my voice. Whenever you smell the fragrance of the red mountain soil emitting with the first raindrops, it will be my smell. Whenever you want to see me, you can just look at these mountains. I will live forever in these mountains, I will always be loyal to them, for they are my destiny and I am at peace with them..."



Camera captures Rahi communicating with the majestic Nanga Parbat (The Naked Mountain) from the base camp - The giant stands as the 9th highest in the world at almost 27000 ft tall



CHAPTER - IV

THE GREAT BATTLES
OF RAHI

THE GREAT BATTLES OF RAHI

THE WAR ON HUNGER

Rahi had always been inspired by the great work of his teacher Zainul Abedin, who mentored him during his college years, but the one series of Abedin in particular that left a deep impact on him focused on the subject of Bengal famine of 1943. In the 1940s, British India was hit by a great famine, mainly impacting Bengali people living in the southeast part of the country. Close to three million people died, making it one of the biggest disasters in human history.

Deeply touched by the historic disaster, Zainul Abedin produced some amazing and thought-provoking work on the subject.

He is remembered today for his powerful realist aesthetic bordering on social inquiry. The drawing was published on the cover of the book, 'Darkening Days' by Ela Sen in 1943.

Ironically, there came another famine in the 1970s which claimed over a million lives in Bengal. Seeing his teacher's work on the subject and moved by the crisis, Rahi started doing countless sketches on the subject that transformed into an entire campaign against global food crises.



1949 Famine, Zainul Abedin
Chinese Ink on Paper
The British Museum Reg#2012,3027.1

"An Artist's War Against Hunger: The fans of painter Mansoor Rahi will soon witness some twenty-nine of his recent drawings on an entirely new subject, the global food crisis. These drawings are colorless illustrations, with distortion in the human form, representative of the title. They could be called 'the expressionistic drawings of Rahi', as the painter himself put it. It is for the first time that any Pakistani artist has touched this subject."

Khalil-ur-Rahman Bughio – The Leader, Karachi, April 2nd, 1975

Influenced by his teacher, Rahi indulged himself in producing one of his greatest series known as The World Food Crisis. This series was initially done as black and white illustrations, then later was done in color. The show was accompanied by a special demonstration from Rahi, where he took the audience through numerous stimulating and thought-provoking slides on the subject matter of famine.



The Hungry - 1971

The slides were prepared by Rahi himself, and were shot on a reversed 35mm film as transparencies and placed in slide cartridges, which were to be viewed on a wall or screen projected by a slide projector. But that's not all. Rahi developed an entire audio package to support the visuals with expressive commentary and special audio effects using the sounds of vultures, painful human screaming, blowing winds and countless other effects that made it a real unique experience for the audience.

Having a strong belief in the fact that food is the most basic right of every single human being and that no human deserves to die because of hunger, he was deeply concerned and saddened to see millions perish. He found some solace from painting that series and bringing the pain of the poor and hungry in front of the world. His show finally succeeded in getting the attention of the United Nations, who recognized Rahi's efforts to spread awareness about this global issue and the show went global. It was exhibited in several different countries around the world, successfully promoting the cause and serving an important opportunity for Rahi to secure international attention on the issue of famine and world food crises.



*Vulture - World Food Crisis,
Second Series 1997*



Two Orphans - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Father and the dead child - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Mother and Child - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Dying Mother - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



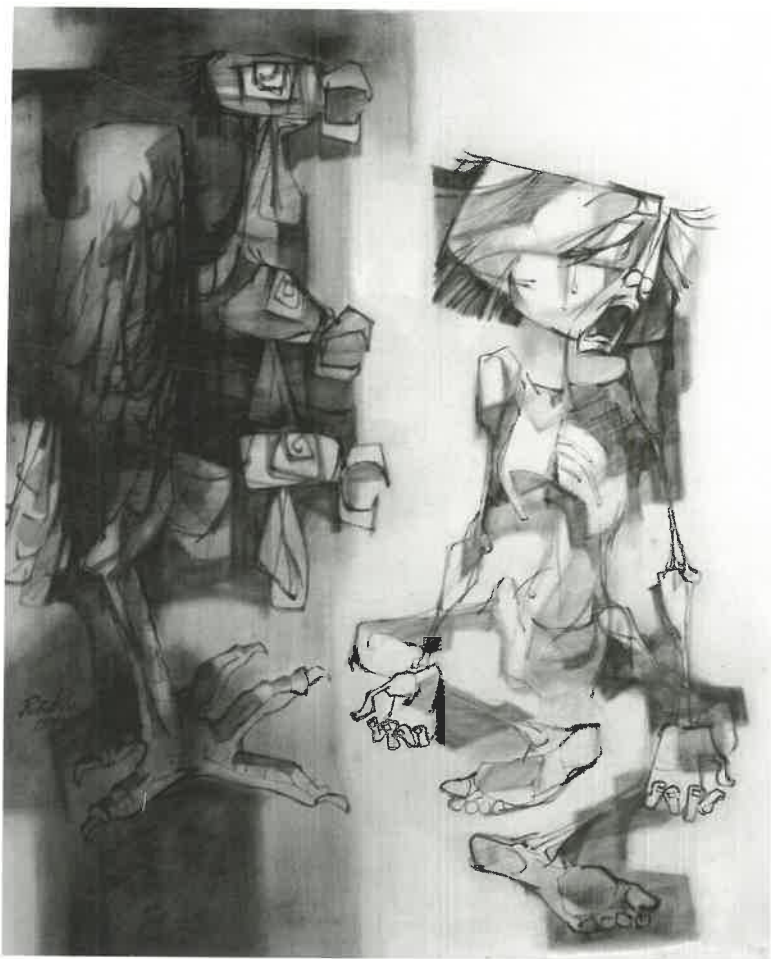
Hungry Boys - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Fear of Hunger - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Starving Thinker - World Food Crisis, Second Series 1997



Vultures And The Dying Child - World Food Crisis - First Series (B&W), 1975



Final Hunger - World Food Crisis - First Series (B&W), 1975



Hate Bomb - Grow Food - World Food Crisis - Second Series, 1997



Mansoor Rahi - Professor of Fine-Arts
In Classroom, Department of Fine-Arts, Peshawar University, Peshawar (KPK) Pakistan, 1984

THE BATTLE TO ERADICATE ART ILLITERACY

Mr. Mansoor Rahi, Principal, Karachi School of Art for over 15 years, is a renowned painter and art teacher of Pakistan. He is one of the pioneers of art education in the province of Sind, where he started the first art school in Karachi and has the credit of producing some outstanding young painters in Pakistan. In spite of his busy teaching schedule, he has twenty-five one-man exhibitions to his credit. His work is in most leading art collections in Pakistan and also abroad.

Ali Imam, Director, Indus Gallery, Karachi, 1979



*Rahi speaking to the art students at Dhaka Art College
- Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2015*

A good teacher is always a good student, meaning that he or she has an innate desire to learn and explore. Only such a mind is able to absorb knowledge, which can then be transferred to others. Rahi had been a born explorer, going through multiple phases of exploration on several fronts. He not only enjoyed learning from his great teachers, but also from his students and even little children. He feels great pleasure and satisfaction in teaching and spreading knowledge. He strongly believes that one's learning can come from any source at any time, even a little bird can teach you some of the greatest lessons of your life. But one must open up their mind in order to ignite their desire to understand and to seek knowledge.

During his time at the Karachi School of Arts as the principal, Rahi always had a passion for teaching. He used to teach several classes and lectures daily. He would mingle with the students, sometimes sitting down on the floor with them and discussing their work. And he did that for over fifteen years.



*Rahi teaching the students during a workshop at the Art Council
- Karachi, 1968*

Even during his limited time in Peshawar, most of his time was devoted to teaching arts. Anytime Rahi had left after teaching his classes at the Peshawar University would be devoted to running art workshops, student shows and brainstorming sessions with his students. In doing so, he was slowly transferring a massive knowledge base of modern arts into the Pakhtoonkhwa (land of the Pashtoons) altering minds and hearts in an immensely talented region that was indeed hungry for it.

He successfully created professional artists during his time in Peshawar. He arranged and took study tours to various surrounding areas, including villages deep inside the Pashtoon and Hazara heartlands. He loved talking to the locals and joked



*Rahi teaching his class at the university
Peshawar University - Peshawar, 1981*

around with the village kids. Many would gather around him to watch him paint, which was a real thing of amusement for the rugged and hearty people of that area, whose hospitality will remain unmatched for Rahi.

When Rahi moved to Islamabad, he started teaching as quickly as he could. Starting out with a small art class of just a few students gathering at a friend's house right in the foothills of the picturesque Margalla Hills, he once again illuminated the torch of knowledge. As soon as he was able to arrange a place of his own, the art classes were moved to his studio and the number of students grew.



*Rahi speaking to the art students at University of Punjab
- Lahore, 1987*

While he was teaching at his studio in Islamabad, he simultaneously helped a few of his students initiate an art school in Abbottabad. Rahi helped many of his students, who became professional artists, jumpstart their own schools and institutes. Such schools started sprouting up throughout the country and even overseas, including the Middle East and Europe. He simply loved the feeling of spreading art education among the masses.

"He calls himself a pure painter. And it is dangerous to get into a discussion with Rahi, about his work and himself. For the simple reason that he is not only a significant painter but also an excellent teacher of his art."

Sajjad Haider Malik – Pakistan Times, Rawalpindi, June 29th 1975

His lifetime battle to eradicate art illiteracy found a turning point when his exclusive TV show, Baray Funkar (Big Artists), started airing live throughout the country in the late 80s. Using live broadcast he was able to teach to the millions at once. Drawings, paintings and letters poured in from every corner of the country, and his popularity as a great teacher of arts skyrocketed.



*Rahi teaching arts on his tv show (live)
PTV (DMT) - Islamabad, 1989*

Throughout his career as an artist and an art educationist he had been approached many times by various organizations, including UNESCO, UNICEF, educational societies, institutes and other organizations. These organizations asked for his support in organizing lectures, art shows, art competitions and other events promoting art education. Many prestigious schools, colleges and universities brought throngs of students to him, so they could be blessed with his priceless teachings.

He often tells his listeners:

"I have thousands of children and millions of grandchildren. These art students are all my kids and nothing makes me happier to see them succeed."

It is important to note that he has also dedicated this book to all the students of arts – worldwide.



Rahi in traditional Punjabi turban and shawl presented by his students in a group show - With his art students from Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Eastern Europe - Islamabad, 1993

Rahi still teaches religiously. He has never given any name to his art classes, for it is not an organized school or institute. He does not issue any diplomas or certificates. He never officially or unofficially advertised his classes or did any type of marketing for it. Yet students from all over the country just flock to him and he is almost always out of space.



Rahi with his art students at his residence - Islamabad, 1999

He believes that the several generations of professional artists and art educators that he has produced -- some of whom running their own art institutes -- have made his mission successful and the process of spreading the arts simply irreversible!



Rahi and Hajra (center) with the students at their art center - Islamabad, 2015

Painter Mansoor Rahi, Principal Karachi School of Art, has formed a new group of young painters who will paint Pakistan's cultural elements and help modern evolution of paintings. Talking to A.P.P. painter Mansoor Rahi said: "I am leading the painters who will give re-birth to our culture through the medium of paintings and sculptures."

A.P.P. Dawn News, Karachi, March 22nd, 1975



*Rahi proudly stands next to his teacher and mentor Zainul-Abedin's bust
Dhaka Art College - Dhaka Bangladesh, 2016*

In 2016, while in his late 70s, Rahi had to go through an eye surgery and was forced to stop painting for almost a month on the doctor's advice. But still he did not stop teaching. He went to his art class barely able to see at all, but he still taught. Even while being visually impaired, he drew and gave practical demonstrations. That's how much he believes in spreading art education. His efforts to eradicate art illiteracy will certainly be remembered for years to come, and he will go down in history -- not only as a great artist -- but also as a great art educator.



THE LONE WAR ARTIST FROM THE HEART OF ASIA

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

Hameed Zaman; Morning News, Karachi, January 15, 1972

Though on the opposite ends of the spectrum, true artists and soldiers have several things in common. They both dislike aggression and fighting, but they both love real battles. They both want to help others, and they both can sometimes be mysteriously crazy.



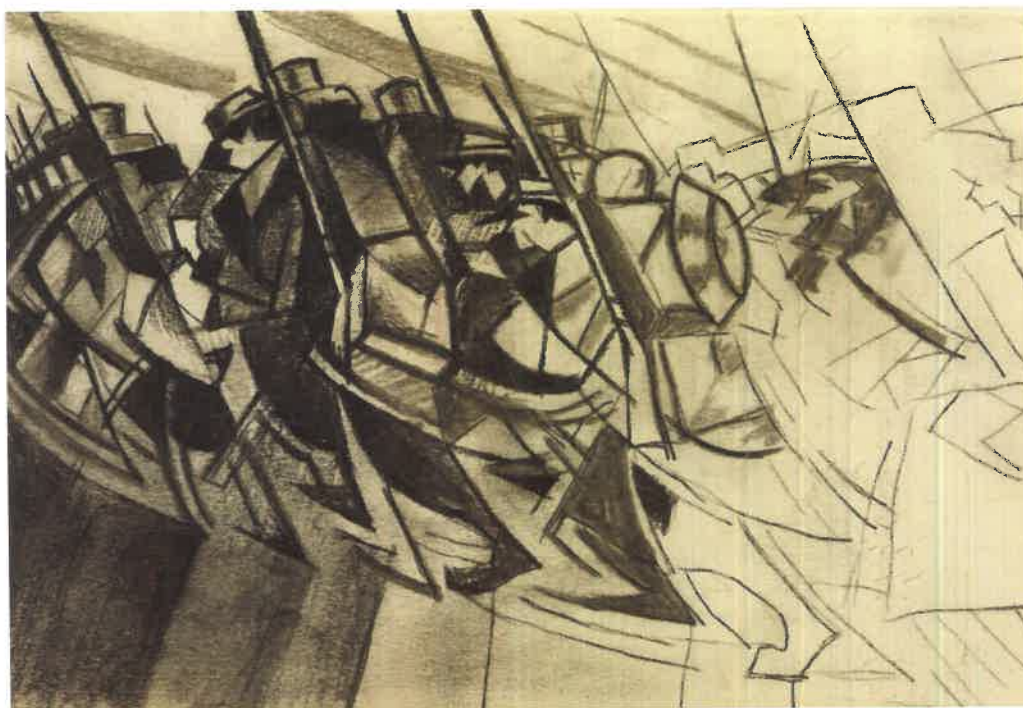
The Foot Soldiers - 1971

War artists have played a key role in bringing the reality and agony of the battlefields to the public's attention. Such artwork has contributed to changing perceptions and public opinion, even altering the outcome of wars to some extent. The critical importance of creating and then displaying war art has been long understood by the world powers, and heavy resources have been invested in it.

During the first and the second World Wars, the British produced a great deal of war art. According to Tate, the institution that houses UK's national collection of British and international arts, the Imperial War Museum was established by the British Parliament in 1917. It was allocated the task of collecting and securing all types of war art, along with other memorabilia. The British government not only bought a lot of artwork that was developed by the artists on the subject of the war, but also commissioned some of the country's best artists to record the war through drawings and paintings. Some of the British war artists who produced memorable work during and after World War One include John Singer Sargent, Paul Nash, Wyndham Lewis and Richard Nevinson.

After seeing the great impact of the war art from World War I, during World War II, the British took war art even more seriously and established the War Artists Advisory Committee, chaired by Sir Kenneth Clark. It commissioned over 300 professional artists to create war art, and the artwork was meticulously collected and then secured at the Imperial War Museum. It was also distributed to the museums and art galleries across the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Some of the key painters who took part in such a massive undertaking include John Piper, Henry Moore, Anthony Gross, Edward Bawden, Stanley Spencer and many more.

The Imperial War Museum still continues to commission war artists to cover wars in which Britain is involved. Commissions have included conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

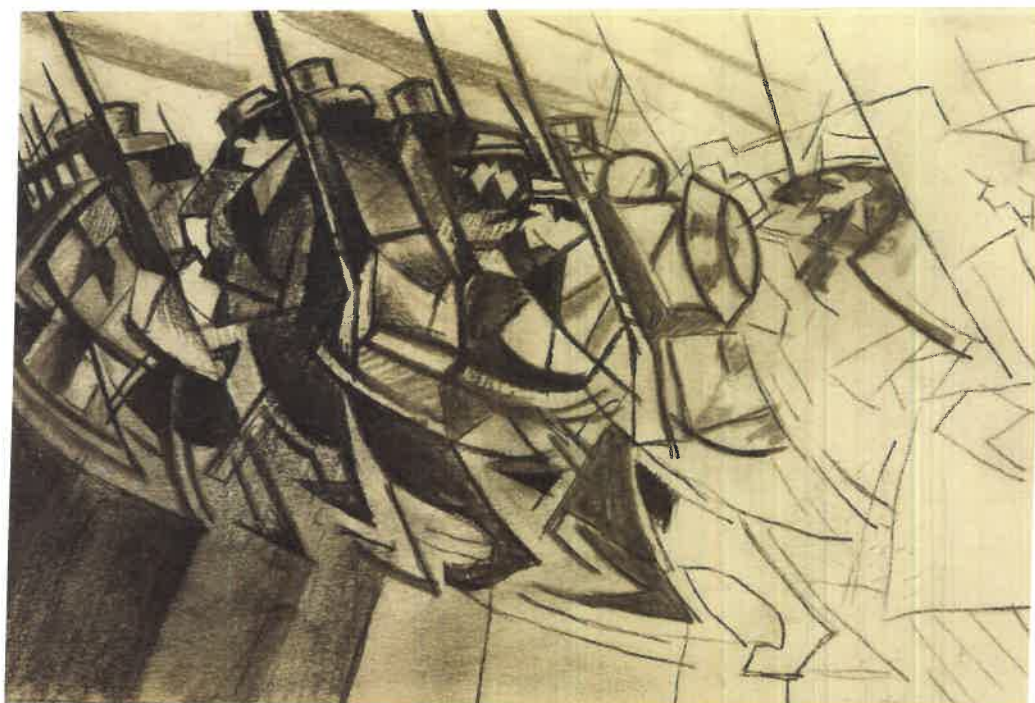


*Returning to the Trenches, 1916, by CRW Nevinson.
Courtesy: Osborne Samuel (educational)*

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*Returning to the Trenches, 1916, by CRW Nevinson.
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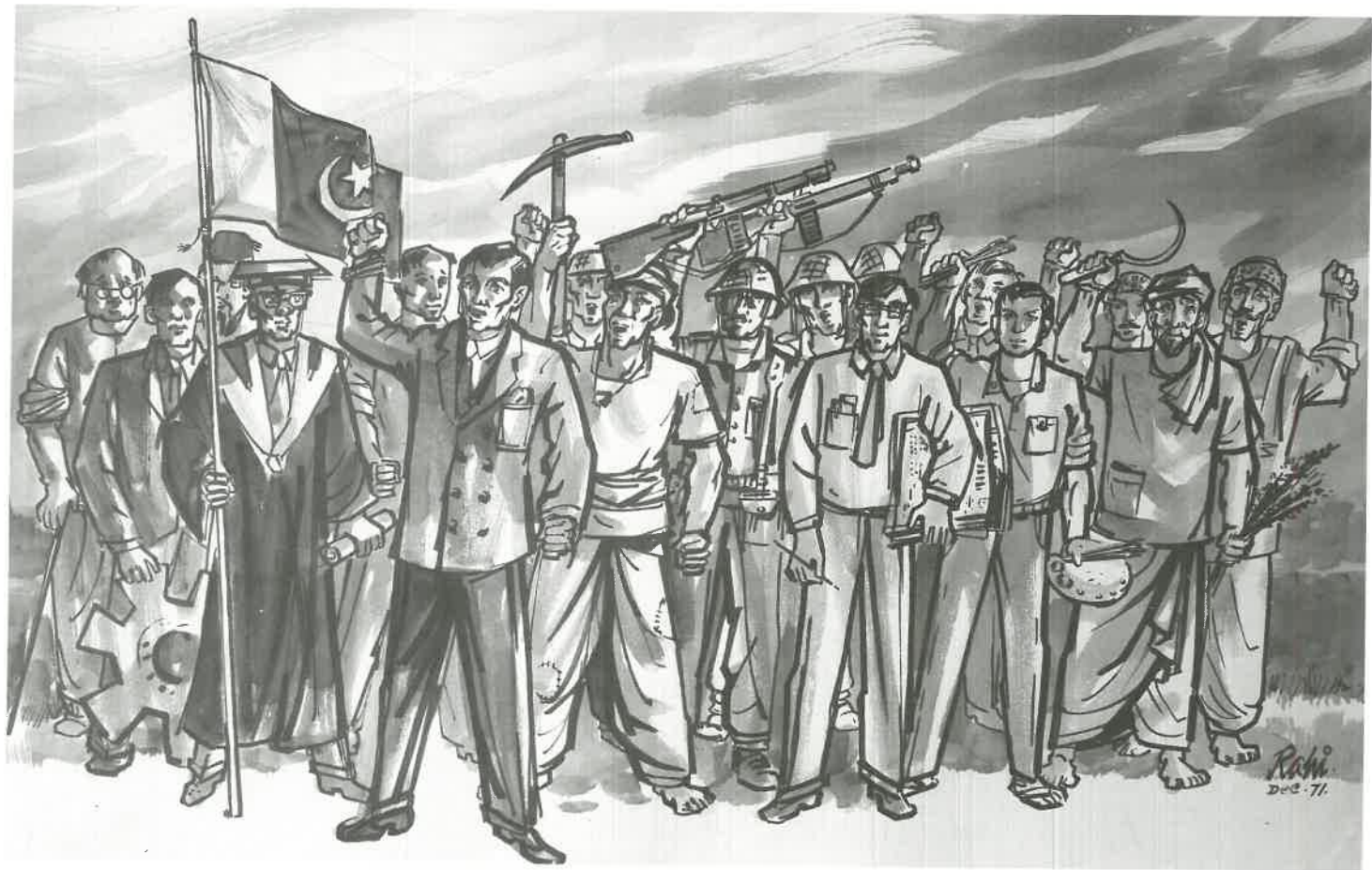
Many European nations, the Americas, Russia and many other countries have given similar importance to war art that holds not only an important place in their history but was also viewed as a strategic asset and national treasure. This phenomenon is important to understand, due to the fact that such artwork can change perceptions, alter public opinions and become a source of soft power that can be used to achieve strategic goals.



Gassed, 1919, by John Singer Sargent

*Sargent was commissioned to contribute the central painting for the Hall of Remembrance
Courtesy: Imperial War Museums (educational)*

Until recent times, the realization and understanding of war art was not as profound in the south Asian region as it was in some other parts of the world. Pakistan went through two significant wars during the time when Rahi was actively painting in Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan. His first war experience as a professional artist was during the war of 1965 and the second in 1971. His conscience did not allow him to ignore these events, and he did countless sketches and paintings on the subject. Without any official commissions or support from any governmental or non-governmental organizations, he took on the role of being the war artist of the time. His work mainly focused on the suffering that took place on the battlefields, as well as the innocent bystanders caught between the battles or who had to be displaced due to the such conflicts. As a socially conscious artist, Rahi's brush fought for the innocent refugees of the wars and the brave foot soldiers fighting on the front-lines.



Unity - 1971



The Indestructible Faith - 1971



The Charging Soldiers - 1971



The Undefeatable - 1971



Destroyed Orphanage - 1971



The Fearless - 1971



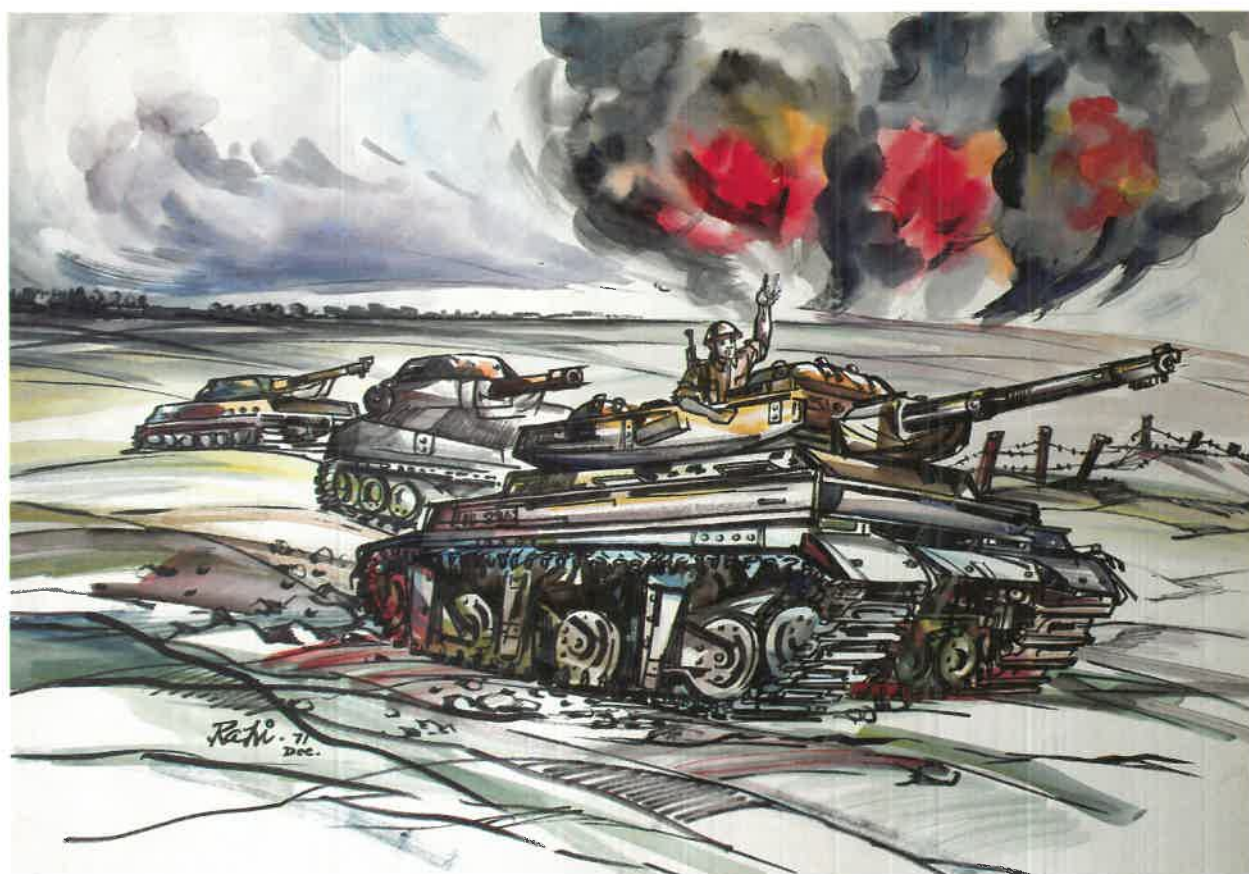
Battle - 1971



Power and Spirit - 1971



Flying Soldiers and The Observing Eagle (Shaheen) - 1971



The Battle Field - 1971

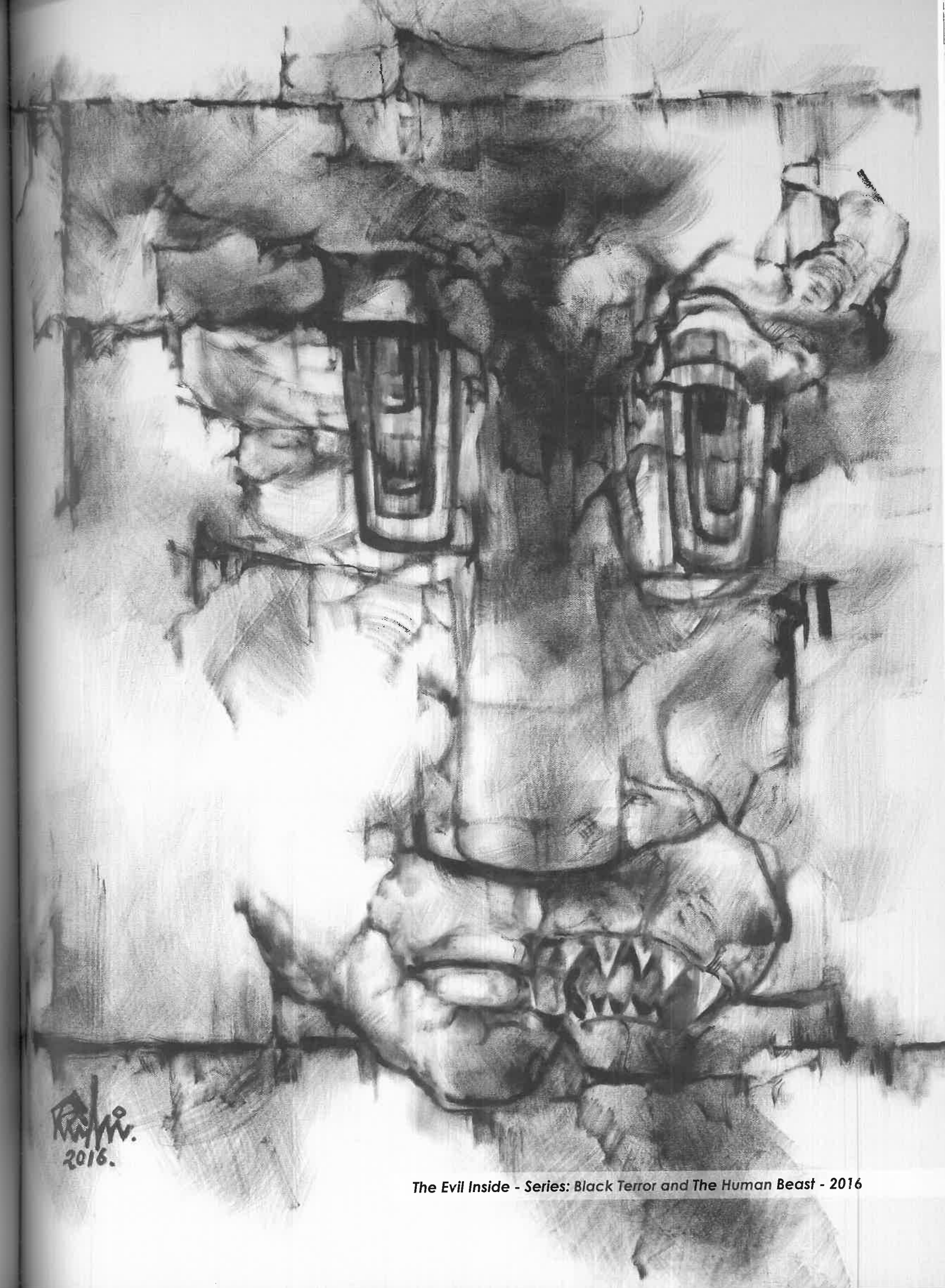
The decade following the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, Rahi did significant work on the changing face of war - about the war on terror. His series, *The Black Terror* and *The Human Beast*, reflected the double-faced enemy. In the series, he depicted the faces that looked innocent and familiar, but in fact housed great evil inside, which fed on the blood of their own. These lost souls spread terror within and without and the undercover antagonists, who killed not only the innocent, but also innocence.



Mad Bull - Series: Black Terror and The Human Beast - 2014

“Where are the Artists?” – Studio research is alright, Rahi says, “but at certain times an artist’s brush needs to be turned in such a direction as to reflect the sufferings of a common man.”

Javed Ansari – The Sun, Karachi, September 9th, 1978



K.M.W.
2016.

The Evil Inside - Series: Black Terror and The Human Beast - 2016

CHAPTER - V

THE MYSTICAL HEALER

HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF A LEGEND



Yoga pose, Margalla Hills - 1985

THE MYSTICAL HEALER – HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF A LEGEND –

It's clear that Rahi was gifted with an ocean of talents since birth. However, it was him who dived right into that great ocean and went on exploring its mysterious treasures, some of which may remain hidden from the world forever.

As a naturally born artist, Rahi was always amused by the human body; he appreciated its form, gestures and abilities. He would simply get amazed by the ability of a human hand to hold a fountain pen and write fluently on paper without any glitch, like an eagle flying in the sky. His childhood observations on the human anatomy lead to formal studies at the art college. At one point during his college years, Rahi's desire to understand the human body led him to a local medical college in Dhaka, where he dissected dead bodies with medical students and spent a lot of time exploring and trying to understand the human anatomy, its muscular formations and bone structures. He still remembers all the technical names of muscles and bones, which one would usually only expect to learn about from a professional physician. His in-depth knowledge of human anatomy is reflected clearly in his figurative paintings. If one must master the rules before earning the right to break them, then Rahi indeed took it to a whole other level through his evolutionary periods.

With such admiration for the human body, it was natural for him to have a keen focus on his own body, health and fitness. Since adolescence he was into bodybuilding and took physical fitness very seriously. In late 1950s, he went to practice under Monotosh Roy, a famous bodybuilder who at that time held the title of Mr. Dhaka and later held the Mr. Universe title. Roy explained to Rahi about the deep coordination between mind and body. He explained to him that in order to have a beautiful body, one must possess a beautiful mind. And in order to possess a beautiful mind, the same type of hard work, dedication and practice is needed.

Roy sent Rahi to a famous yogi in Calcutta, India named Nirod Kumar Sarkar. Under Sarkar, young Rahi learned many valuable habits. He learned about controlling one's thoughts, negative forces and how to achieve self control. He picked up many healthy habits and practiced discipline in everyday life.



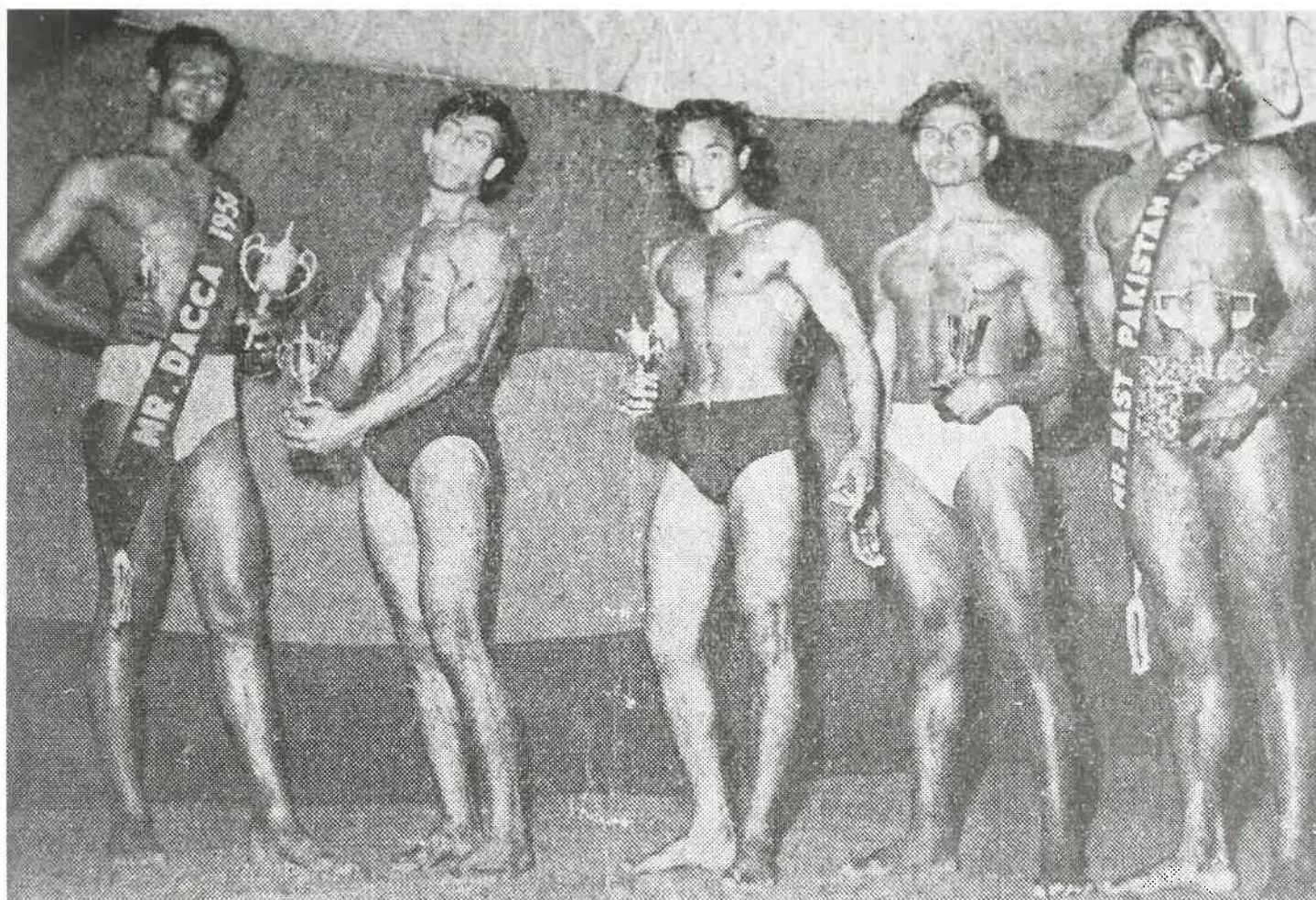
Calcutta - 1955

Rahi still cherishes the time he spent with those great teachers, for the lasting effects both men had on the artist's life. After training with Roy, Rahi eventually earned the title of Mr. Dhaka himself. He became an expert yogi following the practices he learned from Sarkar. Rahi continues to practice yoga to this day.



Calcutta - 1955

Throughout his life, Rahi kept exploring the hidden dimensions of yoga, leading him to deep meditations, which in turn lead to some unexplainable spiritual experiences. For decades, Rahi has meditated five times each day. He never feels thirsty, because he drinks water not by the level of thirst but according to set times and quantity. He is very particular about his breathing exercises at sunrise every morning. Rahi's wife often jokes about his strange habits, finding him doing strange exercises at odd times. She was once startled when she woke up to use the restroom in the middle of the night, only to find Rahi standing upside down on his head against a wall.



Rahi (center) during a bodybuilding event, Dhaka -1956

Everyday, Rahi practices something he calls "The Deathbed." This practice is similar to Shavasana, also known as the Corpse Pose in the world of Yoga. He would lie down on a hard surface with all his body muscles completely relaxed. Moving from head to toe, he released tension from each and every muscle in the body. Even the head slightly tilted in order to relax the neck muscles. He goes into a deep sleep completely cut-off from the world, with no thoughts in mind. He believes that just five minutes on a death-bed is equal to a sleeping period of at least one hour.

On one freezing night, Rahi was sitting with few of his friends somewhere deep inside the mountains of Karakoram when one of his friends asked him how he is able to sit so calmly without shivering like everyone else. Rahi smiled and revealed another little secret. He pointed towards a tiny little Pakish cup of Kahwa, the local green tea, sitting on a little wooden table next to him. Touching the tiny cup's old china surface with the finger tips of his right hand, he explained to them how he is able to use that little cup as a heat source and transfer its heat throughout his body, slowly channeling it from head to toe. He said that he is able to do so with an even smaller heat source and with much smaller area of contact, like a single fingertip or tip of his toe. Not only that, the

same is possible for him in case his body temperature is high and needs to be lowered. He can achieve that by touching something cold, like an ice cube, and transferring the cooling effect through his body. His family never witnessed him complaining of a headache, and they never saw him suffering from seasonal cold, allergies or flu.



Rahi Studios - Karachi, 1970

Rahi healed many people through his knowledge of yoga and spirituality. Many have come to him with not just physical problems, but also psychological issues and personal problems. He would guide them with a deep intention to help. Nothing gives him more pleasure than helping others and to see them overcome their challenges and troubles.

Rahi only remembers a few of the countless people he healed. Among those closest to him, he remembers healing his younger brother, whose ribcage was misaligned. The breastbone or the sternum did not lineup correctly, but with several months of yoga exercises Rahi was able to align the ribcage, slowly moving it back into position.

There can be a long list of health conditions that Rahi cured, including chronic headaches, distorted legs, anger management and so on. But for him, one of the most memorable cases was that of his own son, who at the age of seven started showing some signs of a possible neurological disorder. He would shake at night and often jolt or shudder his head during the day. Rahi knew immediately that this was no typical problem that would simply go away with time, but that it was something more serious.



Yoga pose - Margalla Hills, 1985

He took his son to the best pediatricians and neurologists in town and went through all types of tests, but nothing was found wrong with the boy. The doctors were baffled by the symptoms and remained unable to pinpoint any illness or a particular problem.

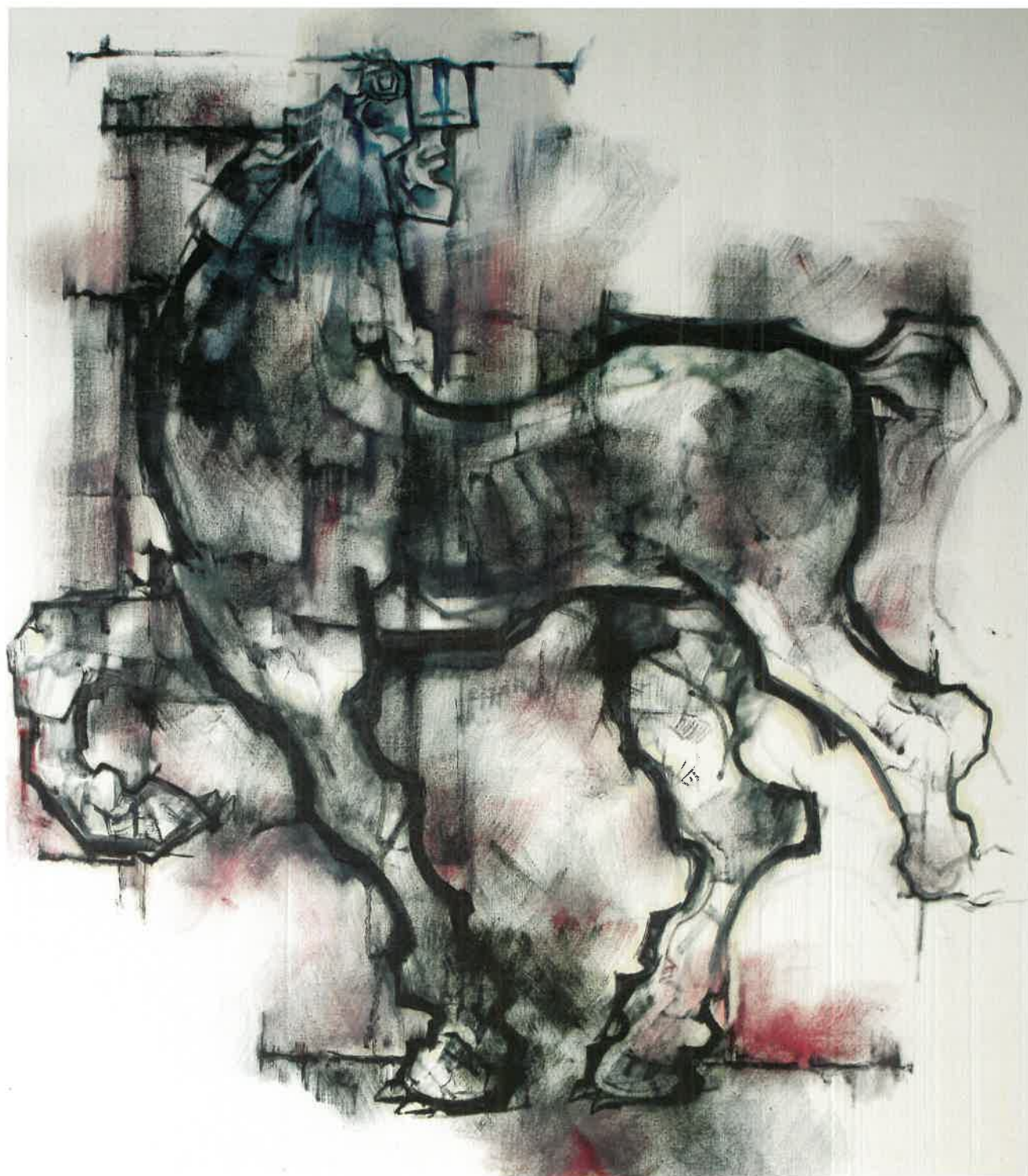
After days of unsuccessful medical investigations, Rahi took it upon himself to treat his only son. Relying only on his yoga skills, he began daily yoga sessions with his little boy.

Rahi would stay up all night to observe the symptoms as the boy slept. Slowly but surely, he started noticing some improvement. The sudden jitters and shaking became less frequent and eventually after weeks of regular yoga exercises, it went away and his little boy healed completely.

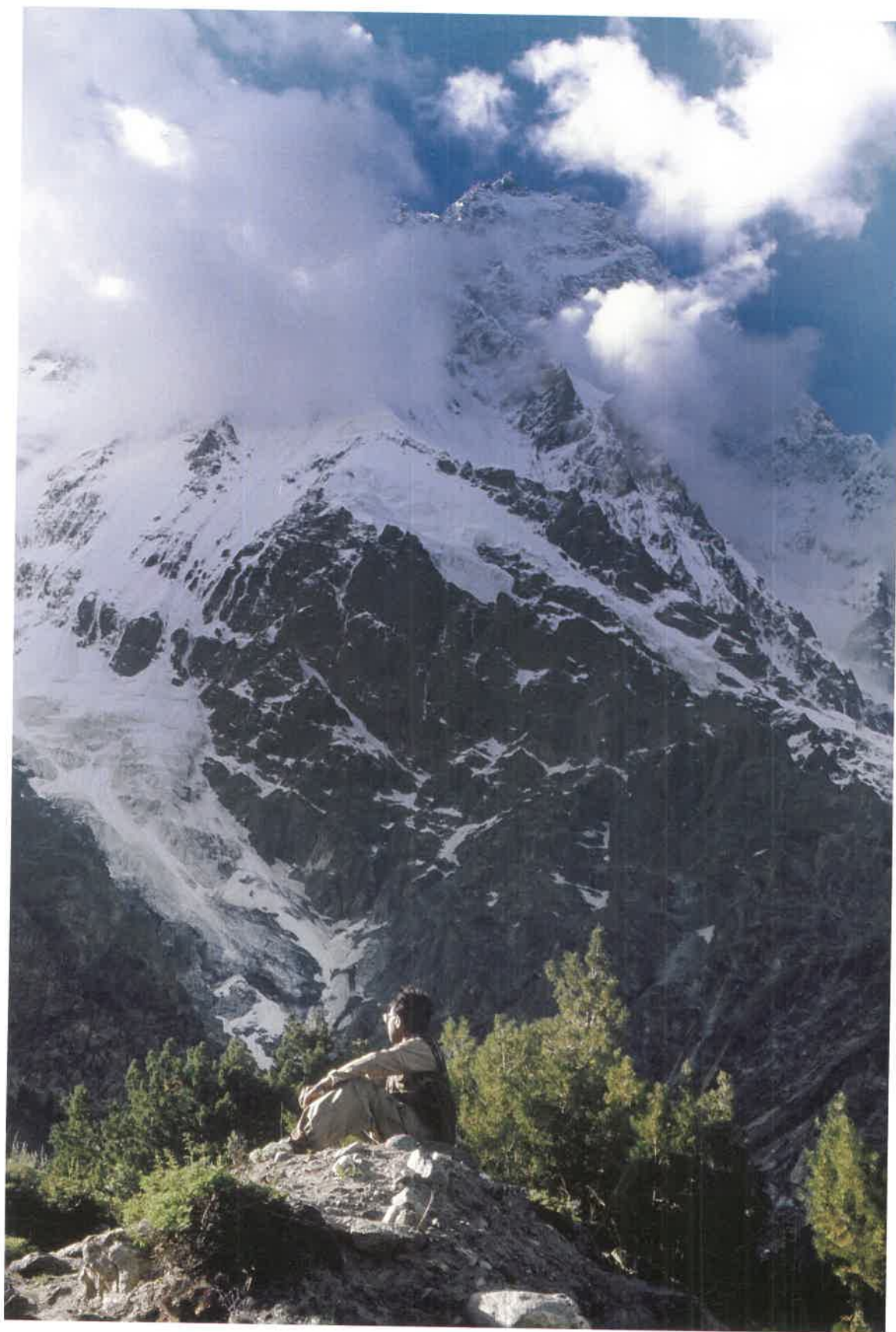
Rahi's life is full of such stories; his level of spirituality keeps elevating with time and his paintings reflect that spiritualism. In his late 70s, Rahi started exploring life after death and initiated a new period of his work called Final-Fantasm.

He would use his mystical abilities to communicate with higher beings. He holds a mystical ability to see beyond what is known to the common eye, but he would shy away from speaking any further or giving any detail, insisting that he is just an explorer trying to learn and seek truth.

We may never know the real depths of this spiritual master, and some things are better left hidden forever.



Beyond Human - 2016



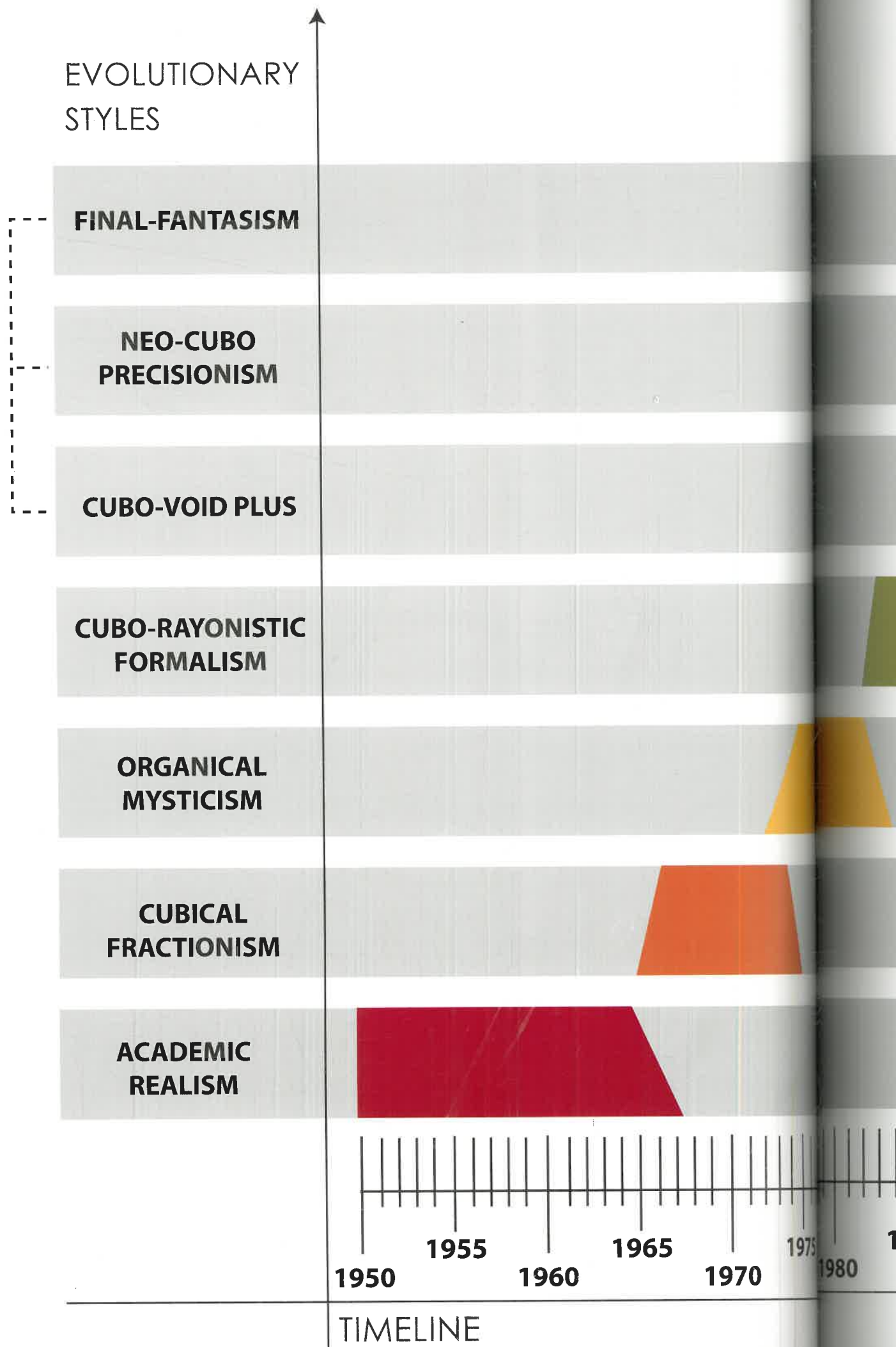
*Meditating under the shadows of Nanga Perbat (The Naked Mountain)
Nanga Perbat Base Camp - Gilgit Baltistan, 1989*

CHAPTER - VI

RAHI

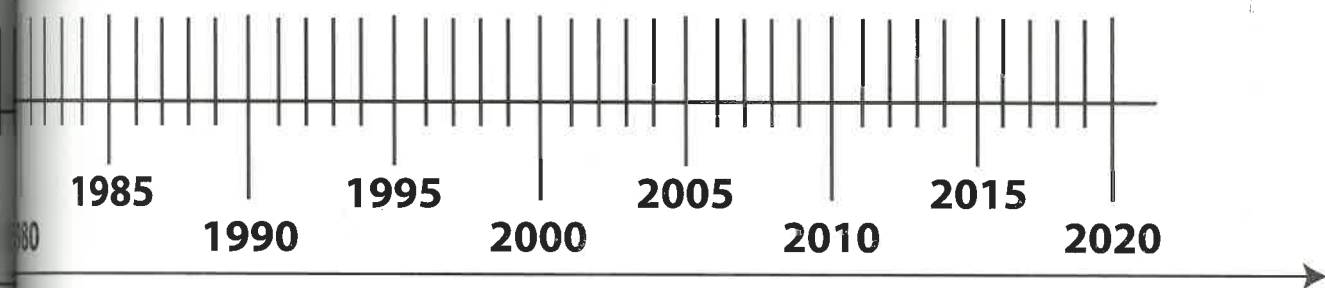
PERIODS OF EVOLUTION
THE MASTER GALLERY

RAHI EVOLUTION GRAPH



3 SIMULTANEOUS STYLES

2 SIMULTANEOUS STYLES





RAHI
2016

Rahi's iconic signature used by him countless times on his paintings and autographs

I

ACADEMIC REALISM

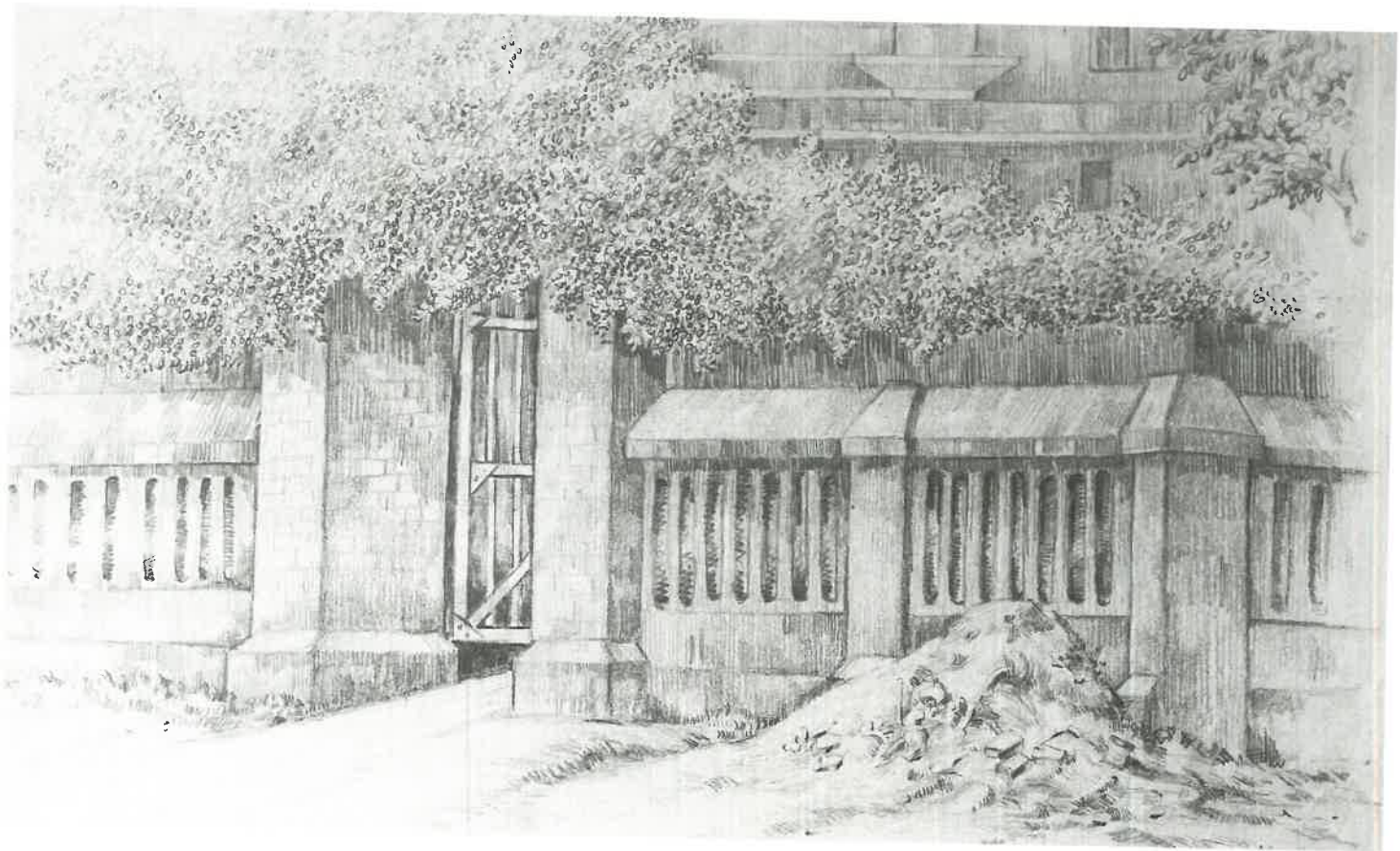
[1957 - 1968]



Roll Number -1 - The first recorded art work by Rahi from his college days - Dhaka, 1957



Field Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1957



Field Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1957



Nature Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1957



Nature Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1957



Anatomy Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1958



Nature Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1958 (May 22nd)

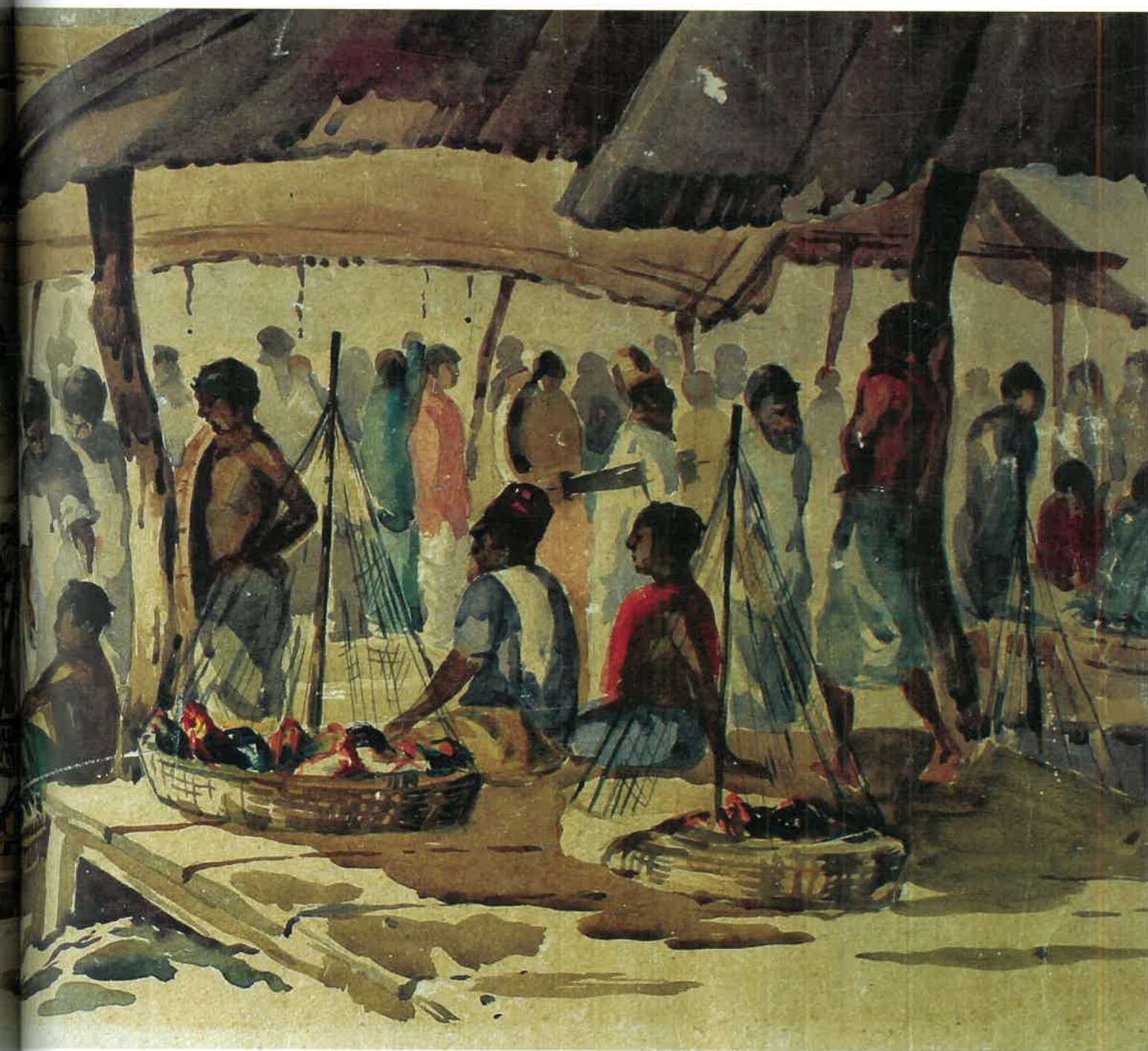


Portrait - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1959



Portrait - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1959





Local Market Scene - Field Study - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1959





The Chakma Twins - Portrait - Academic Period - Dhaka Art College - Dhaka, 1960



The Snake Charmer - Academic Period - Dhaka, 1961



Landscape - Academic Period - Chittagong, 1962

II

CUBICAL FRACTIONISM

[1965 - 1975]

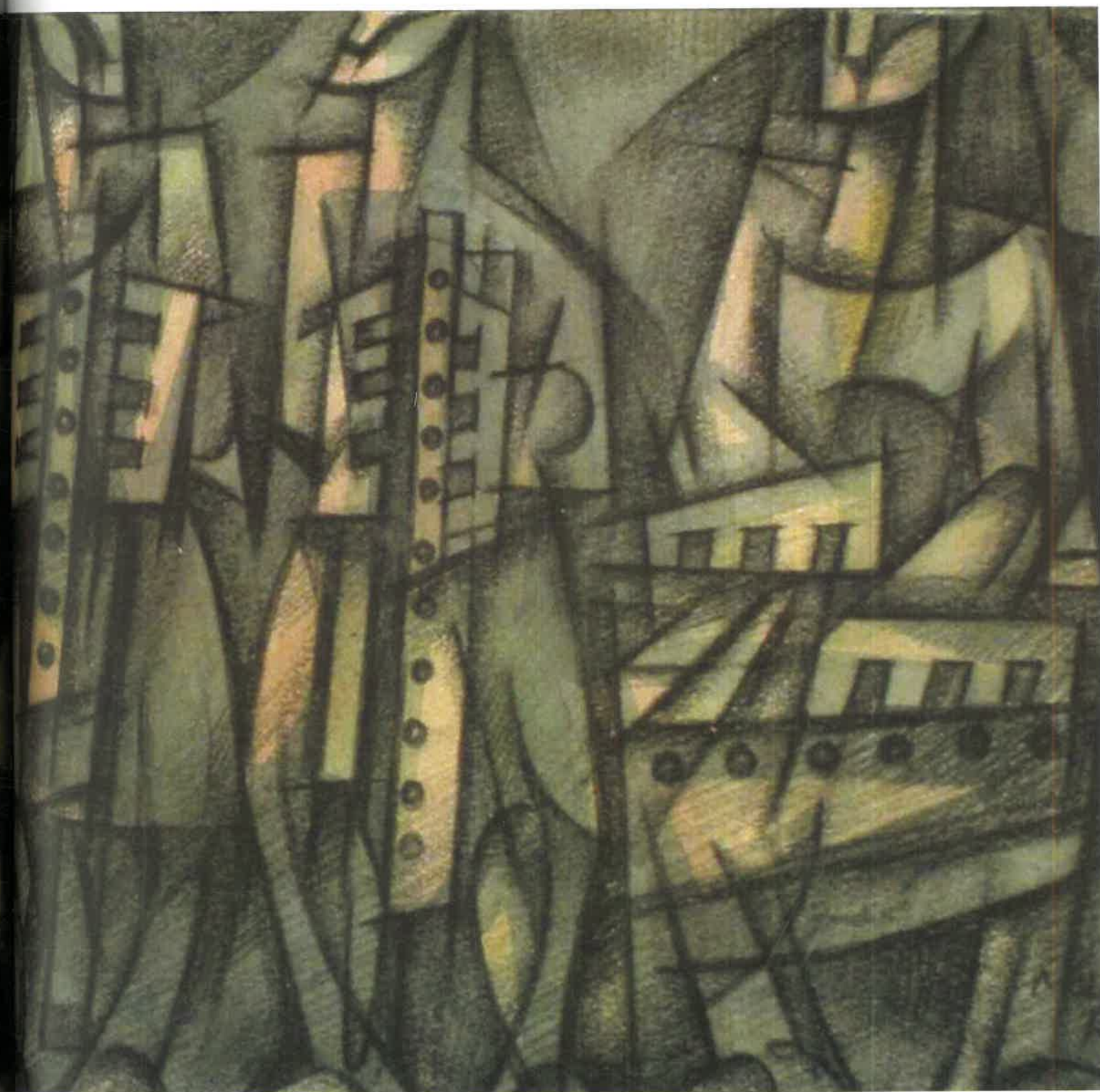


The Thinker - 1966



The Musician (series) - 1966

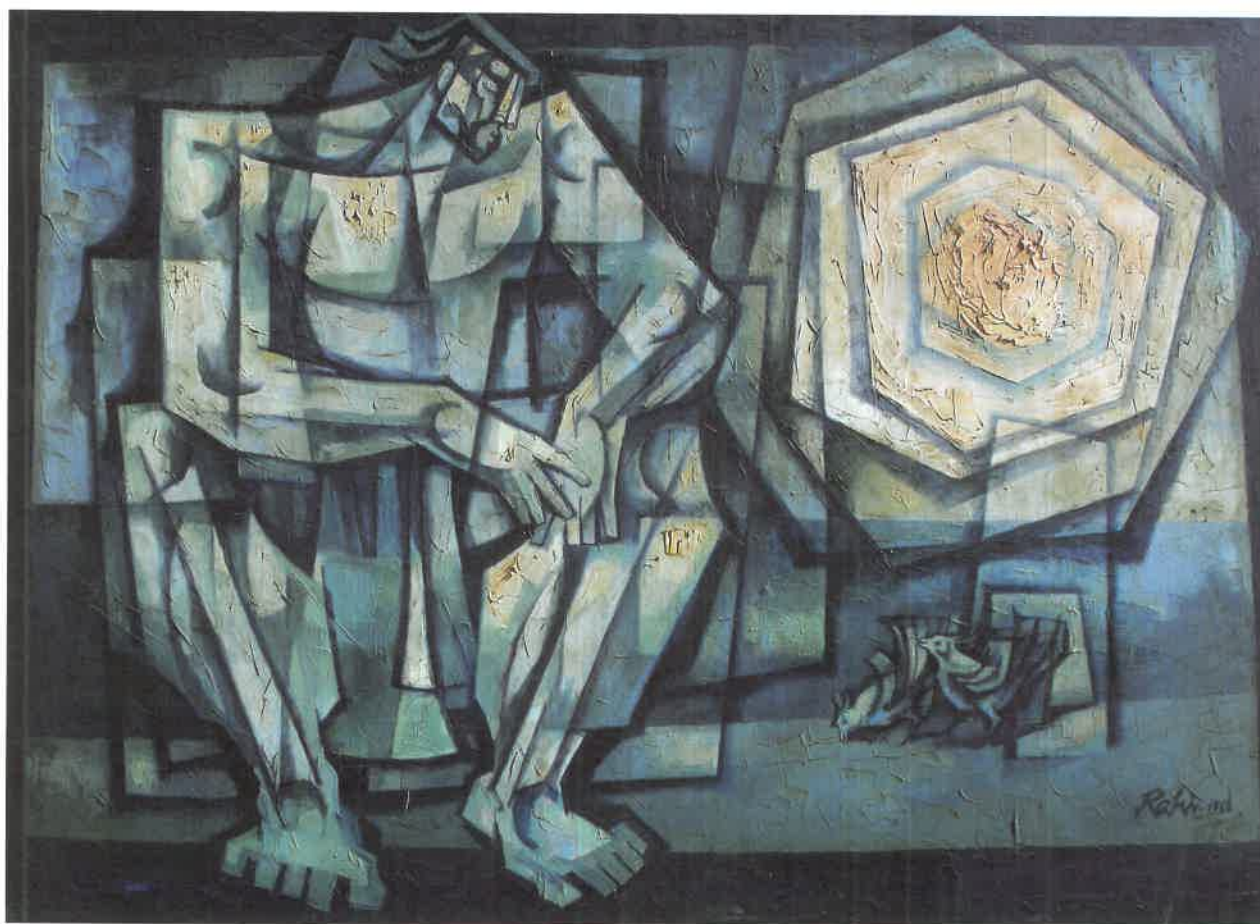




The Musician (series) - 1966



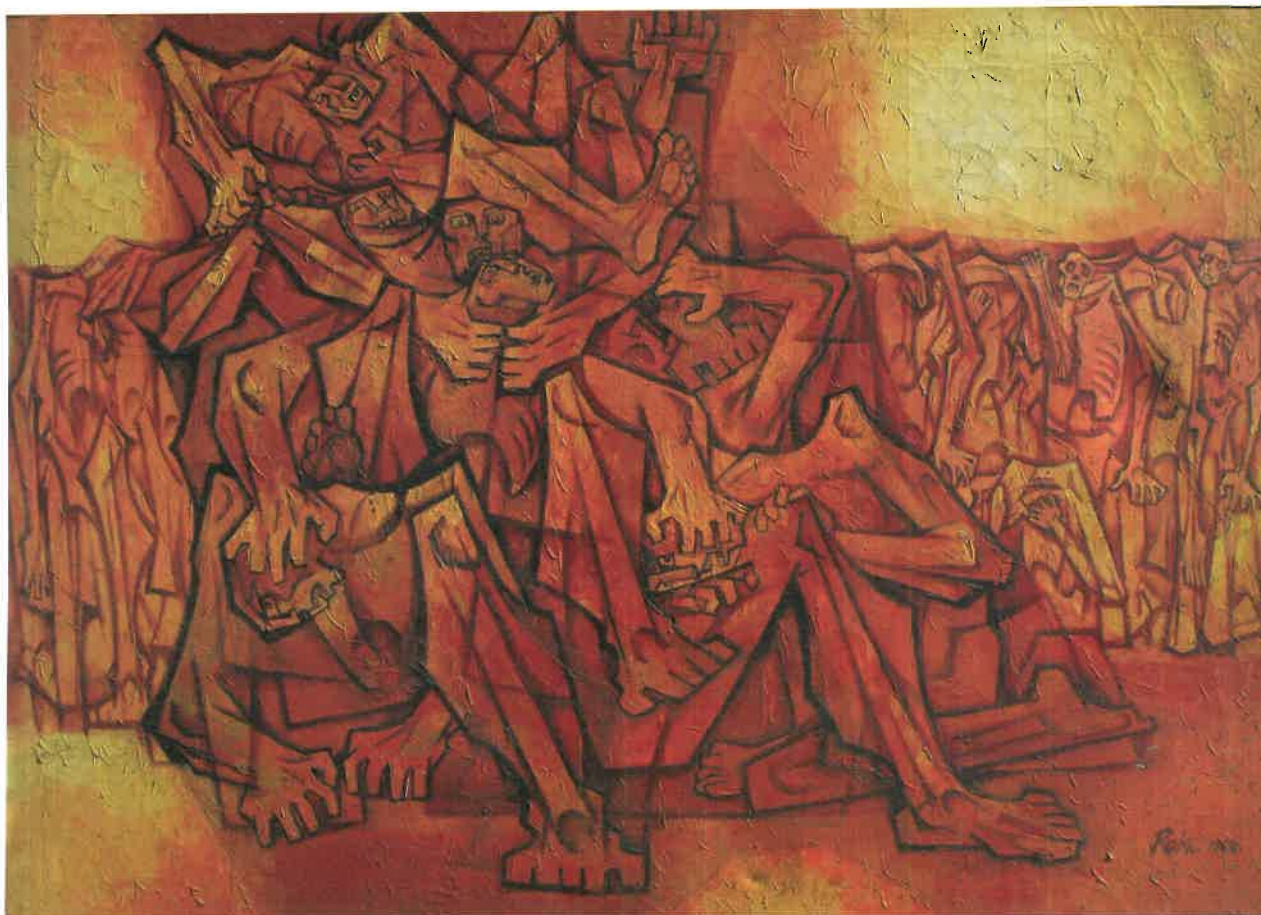
The Great Transition - 1966



Man And The Birds - 1968



The Royal Family - 1968



Glimpse of Hell - 1968



Followers of the Dawn - 1968



The Musician (series) - 1969



King of Hell and The Surviving Flower - 1970



Portrait of a Pashtoon Man (Flash Finish) - 1975



Rahi Studios - Karachi - 1975

III

ORGANICAL MYSTICISM

[1973 - 1981]



The Seated Figure - 1973



The Faces (series) - 1973



The Faces (series) - 1973



The Faces (series) - 1973



The Faces (series) - 1973



Madona - Seated Figure - 1977



Mother and Child - 1979

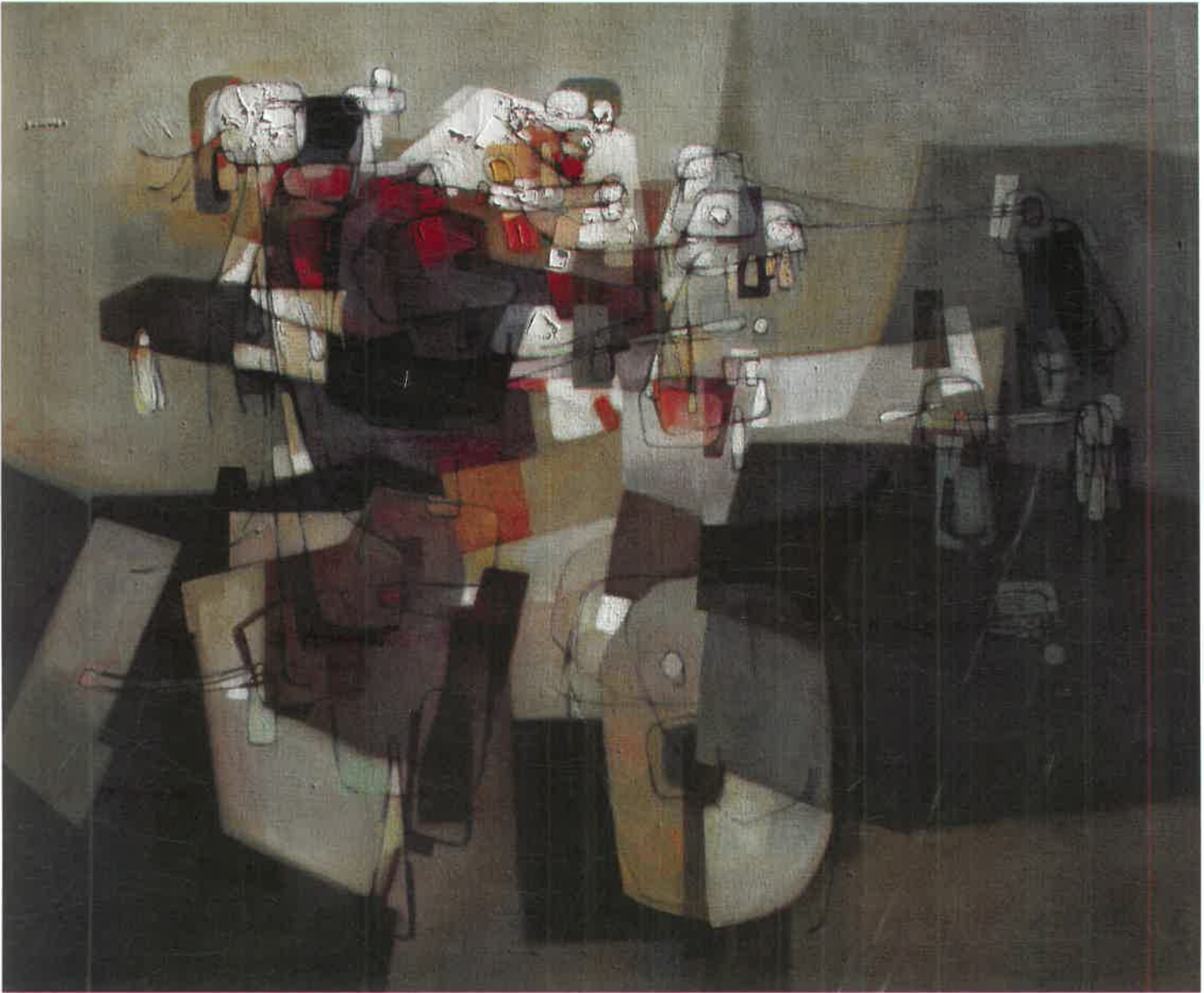
IV

CUBO-RAYONISTIC
FORMALISM

[1982 - 1997]



Wild Horse (series) - 1982



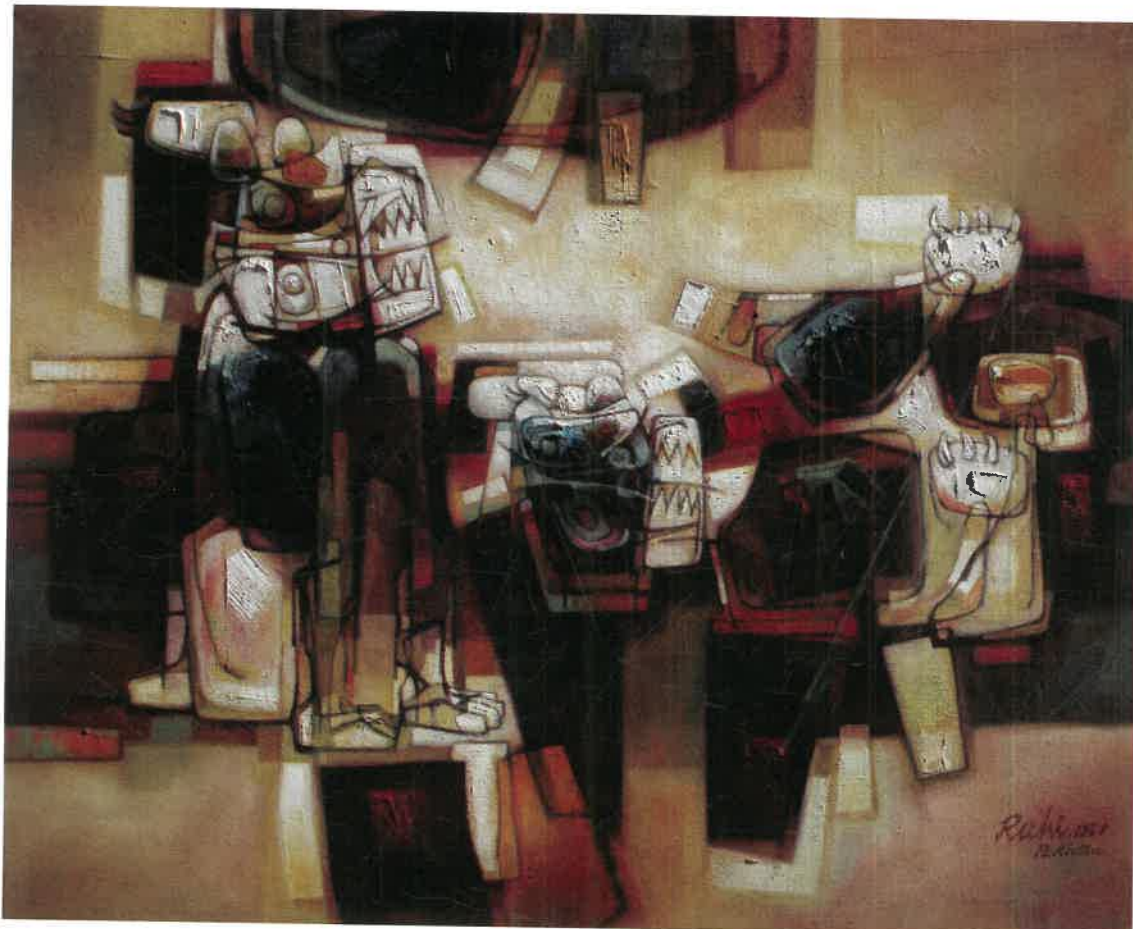
Wild Horse (series) - 1982



Wild Cat (series) - 1985



Wild Cat (series) - 1986



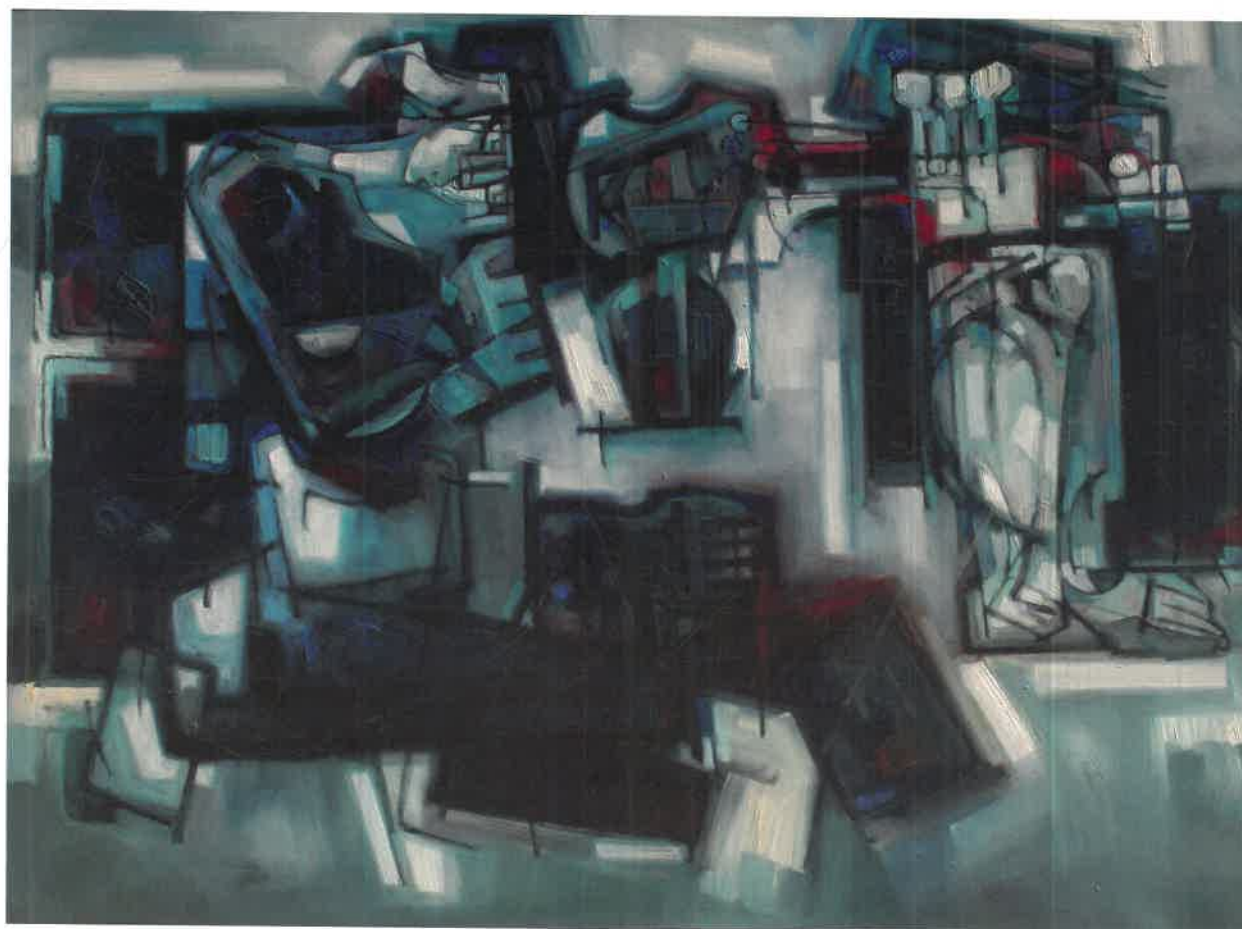
Wild Cat (series) - 1987



Orphan Brothers - 1987



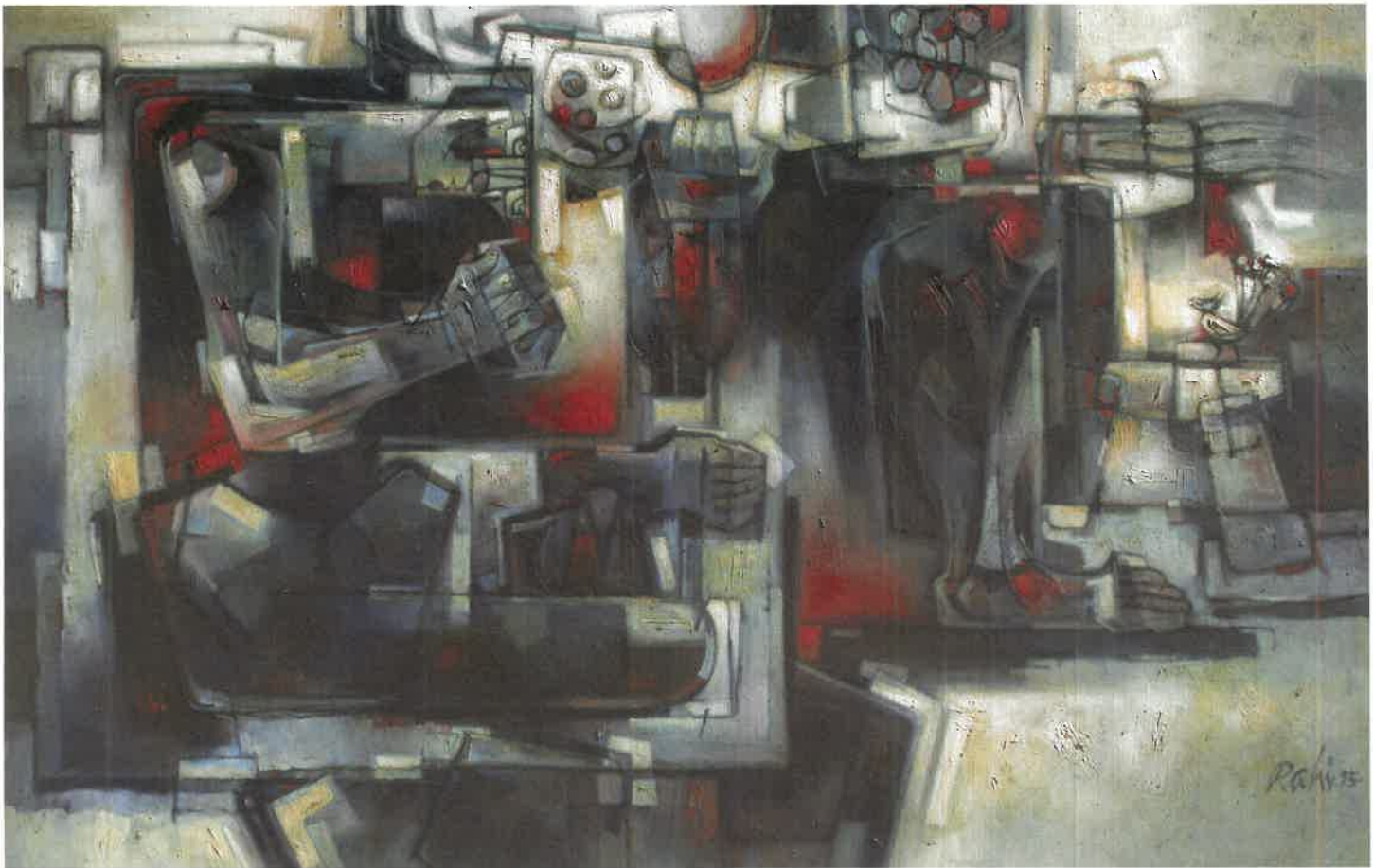
Wild Horse (series) - 1987



Violinist (series) - 1988



Wild Horse (series) - 1989



Violinist (series) - 1995



Violinist (series) - 1995



Wild Horse (series) - 1996

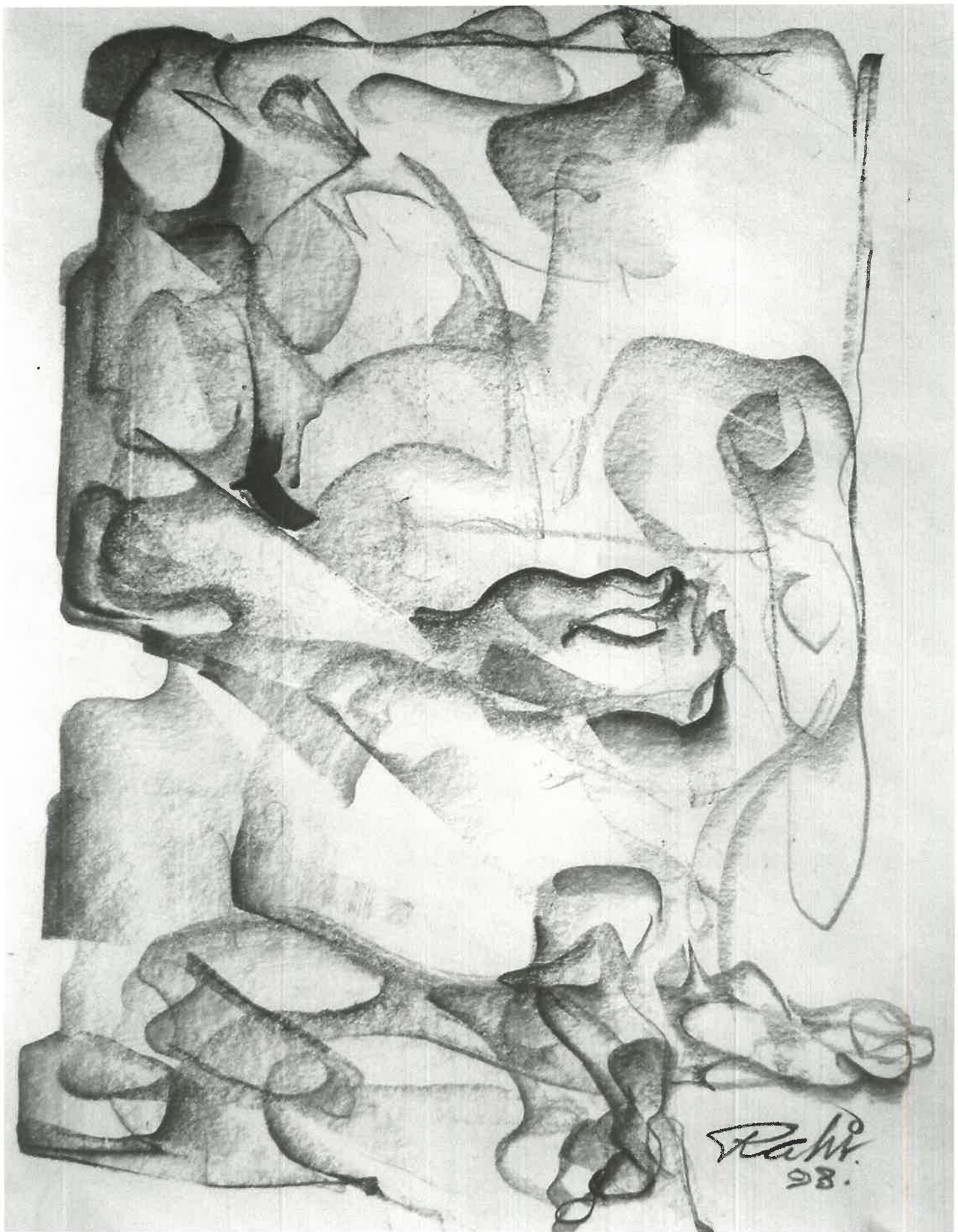


Lady With The Bird - 1996

V

CUBO-VOID PLUS

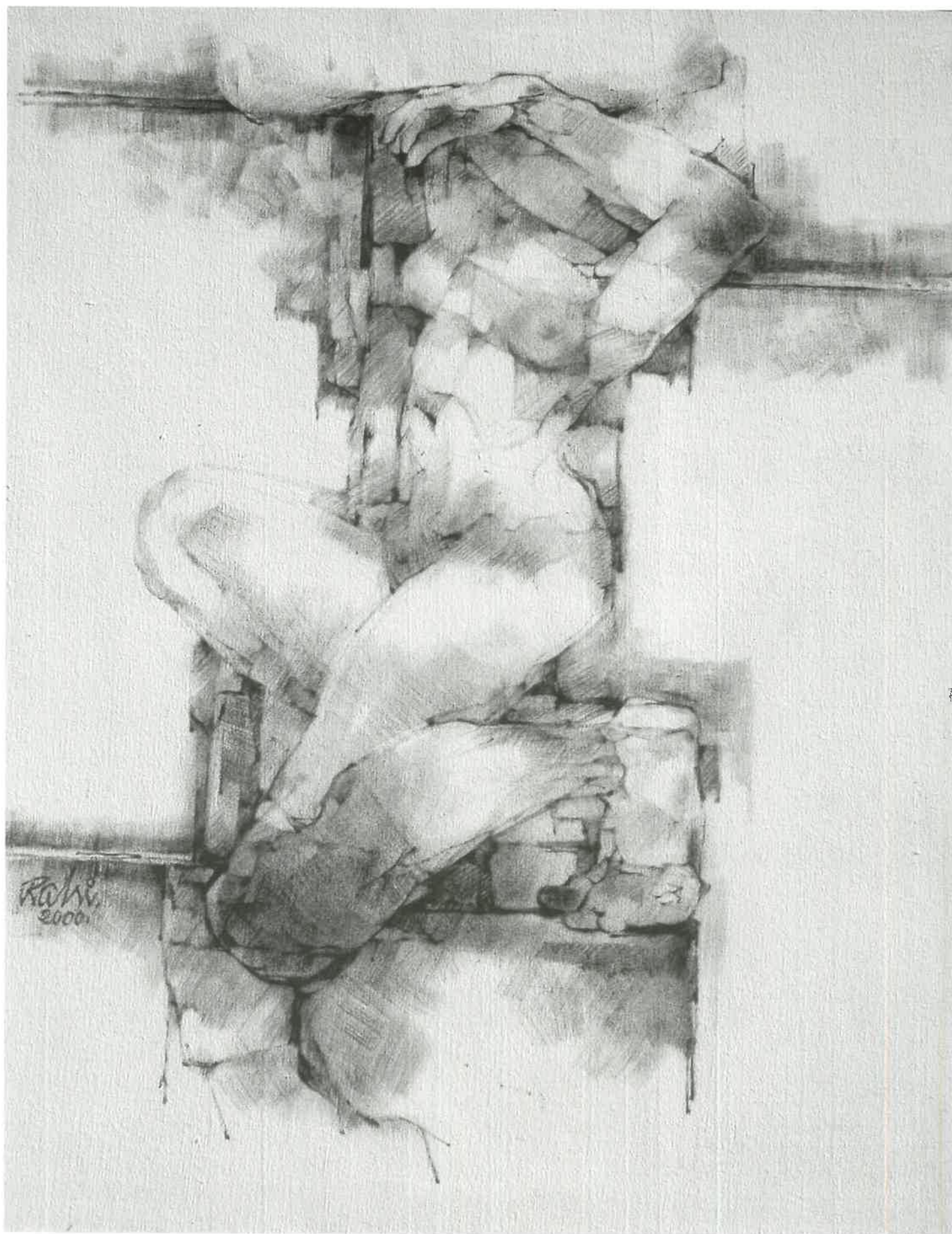
[1997 - SUSTAINED]



Seated figure - Graphite, Flash Finish - 1998



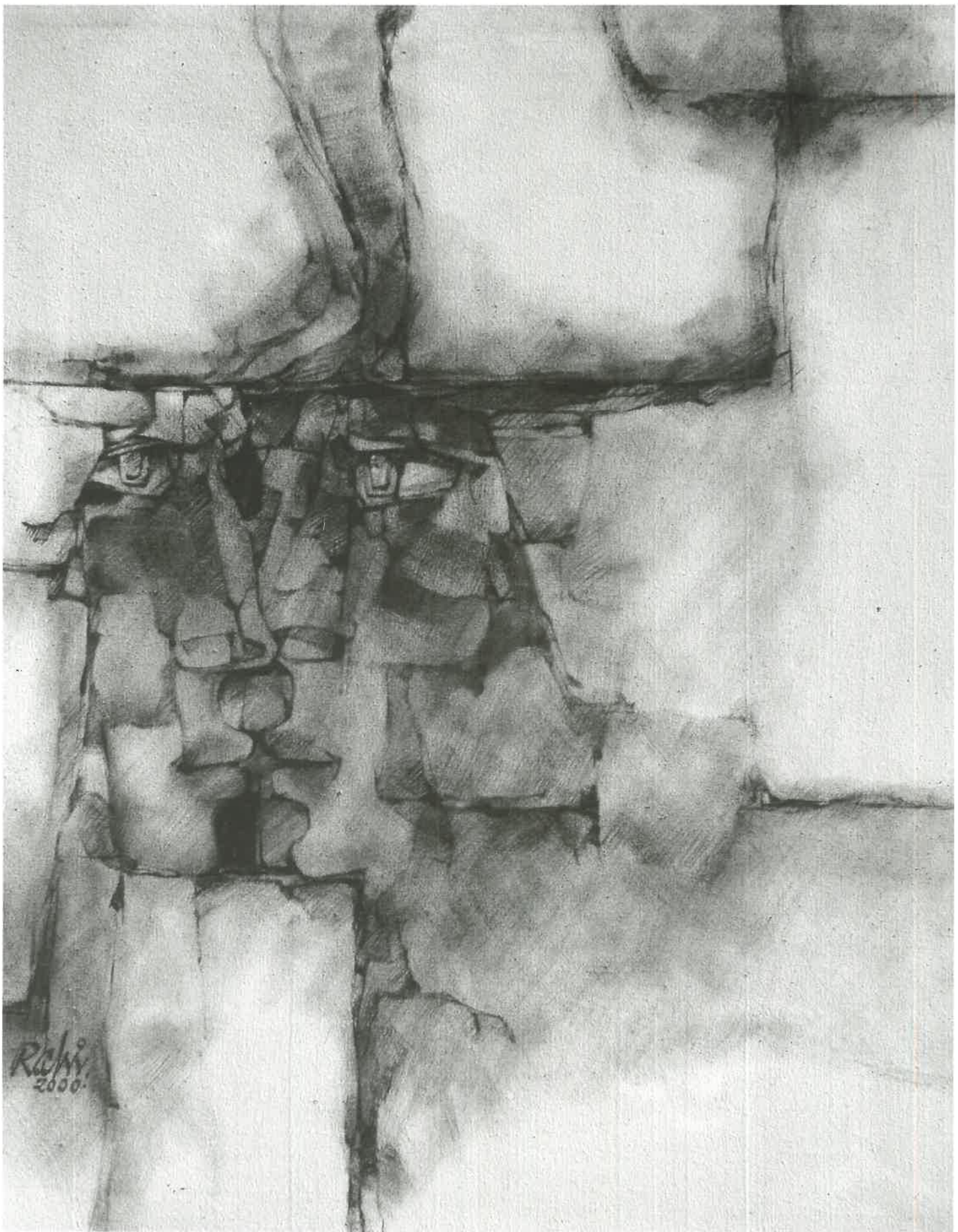
Human Figure - Brush Drawing, Flash Finish - 1998



Human Form - 2000



Human Form - 2000



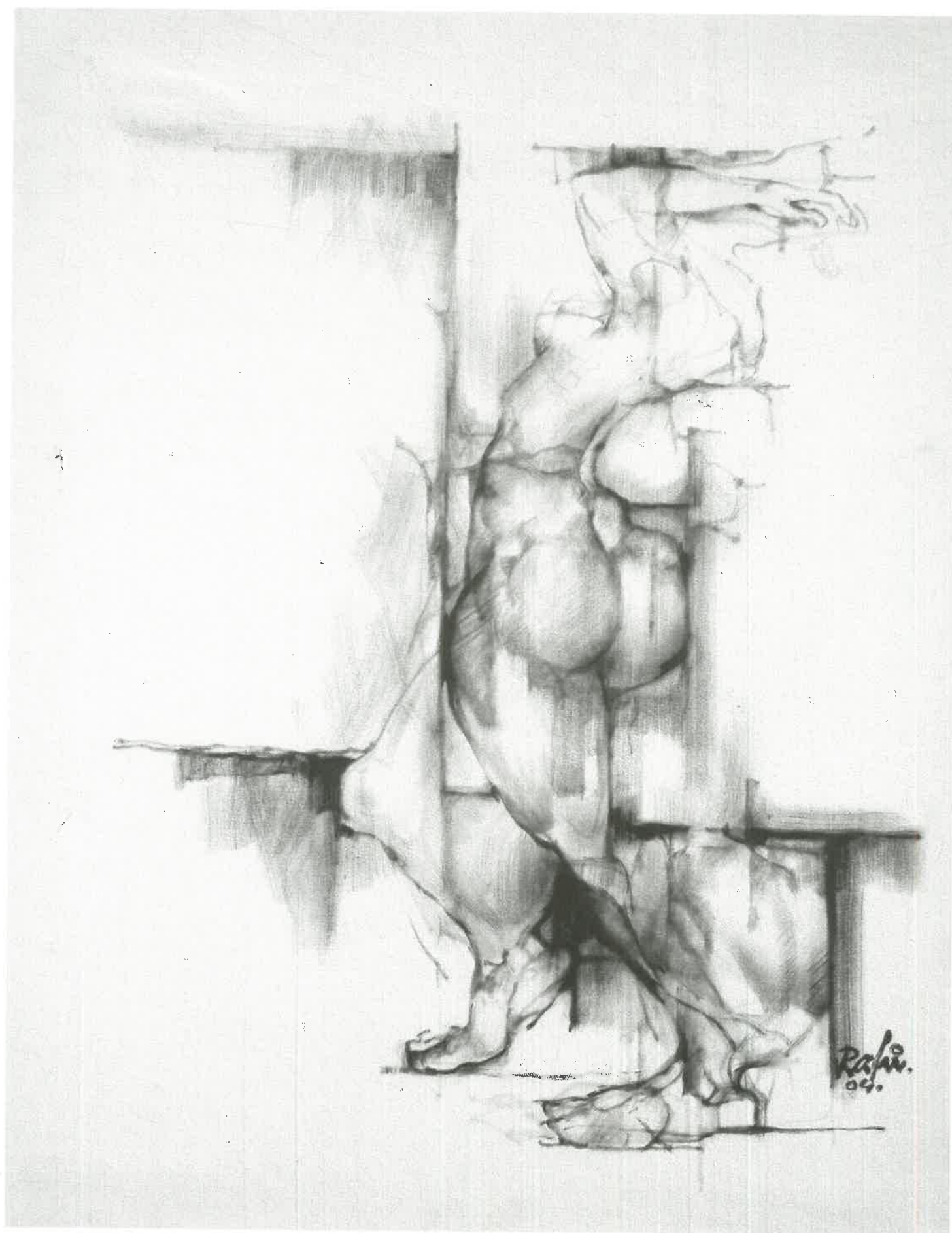
Two Faces - 2000



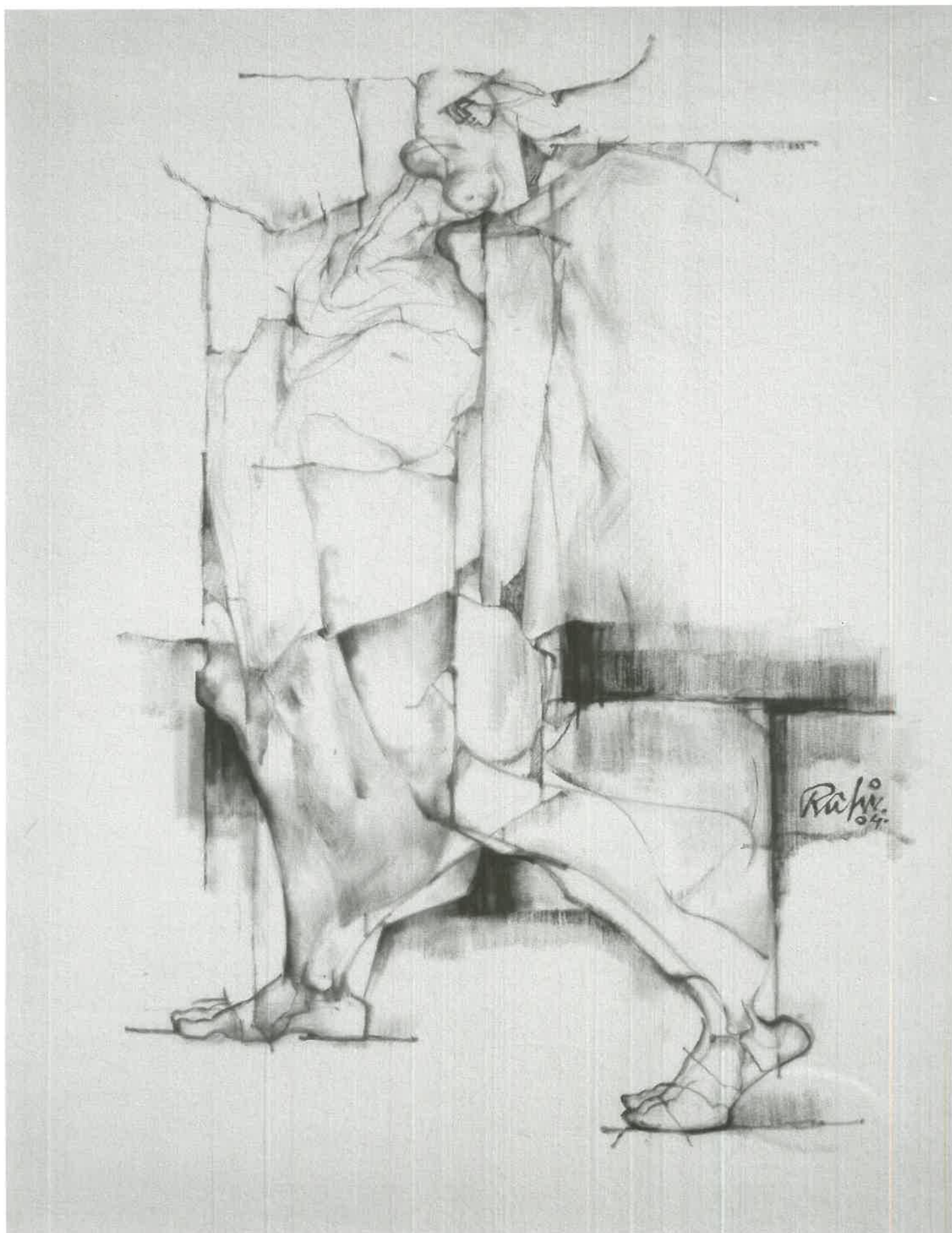
Human Form - 2001



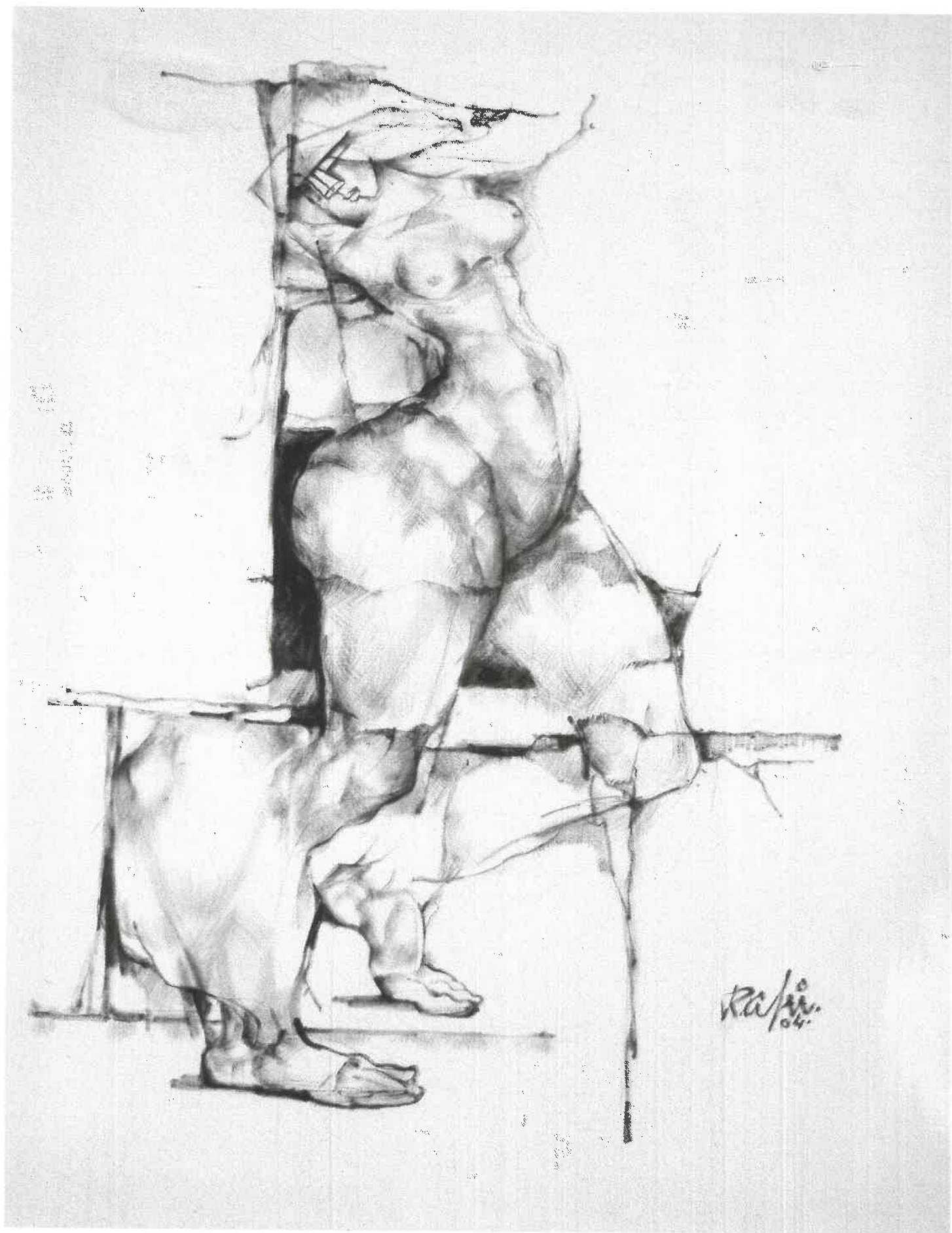
Human Form - 2004



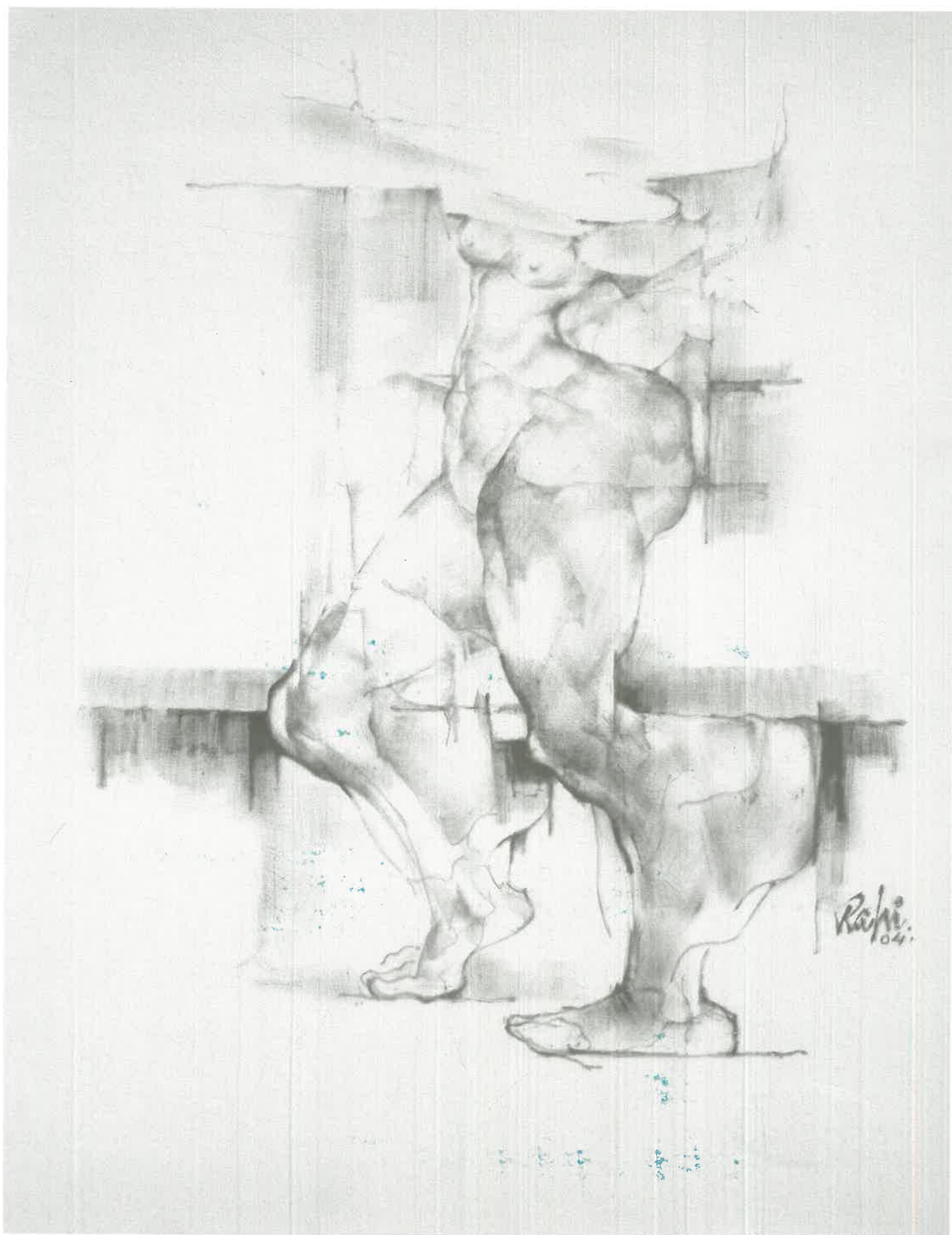
Human Form - 2004



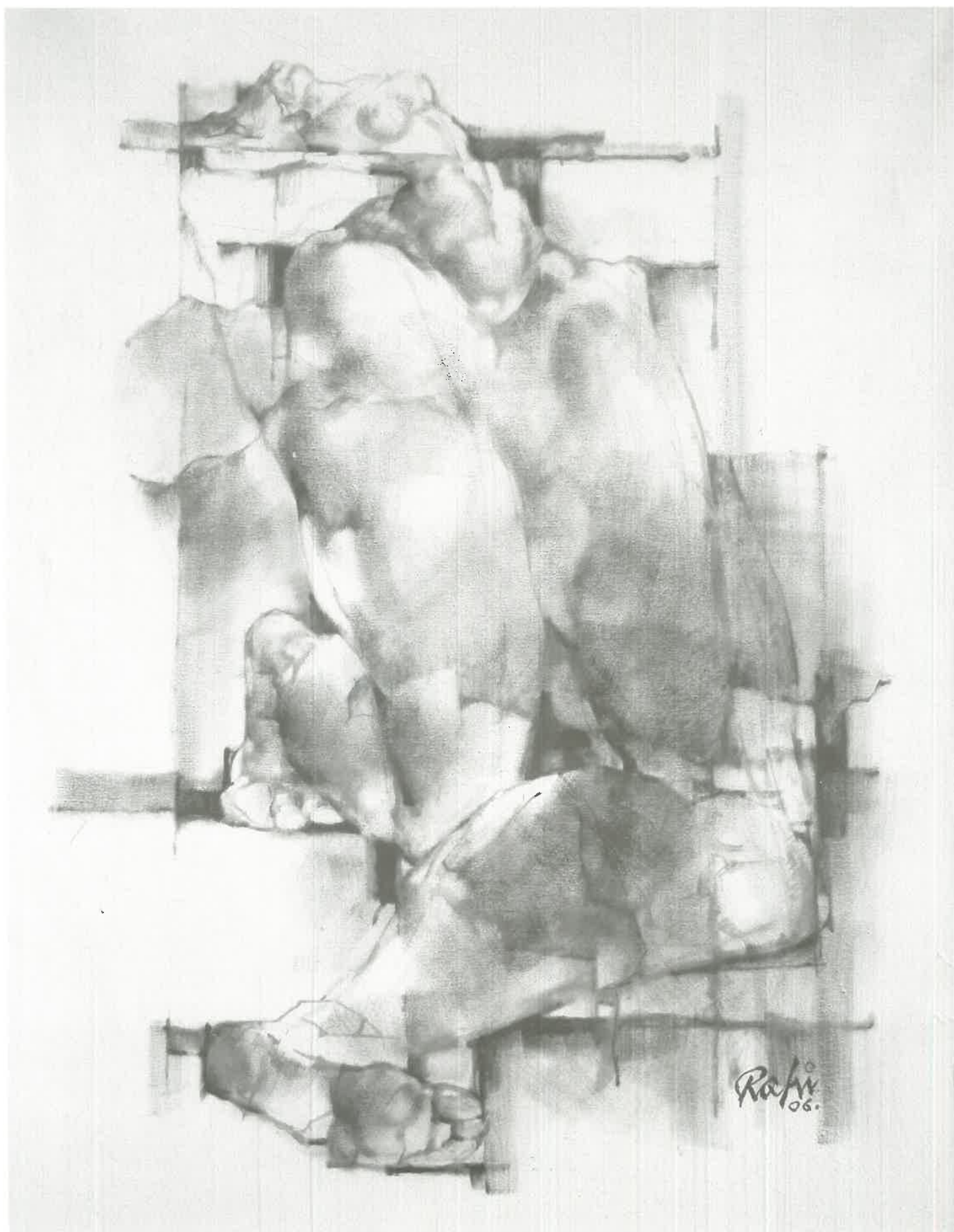
Human Form - 2004



Human Form - 2004



Human Form - 2004



Human Form - 2006

VI

NEO-CUBO
PRECISIONISM

[2000 - SUSTAINED]



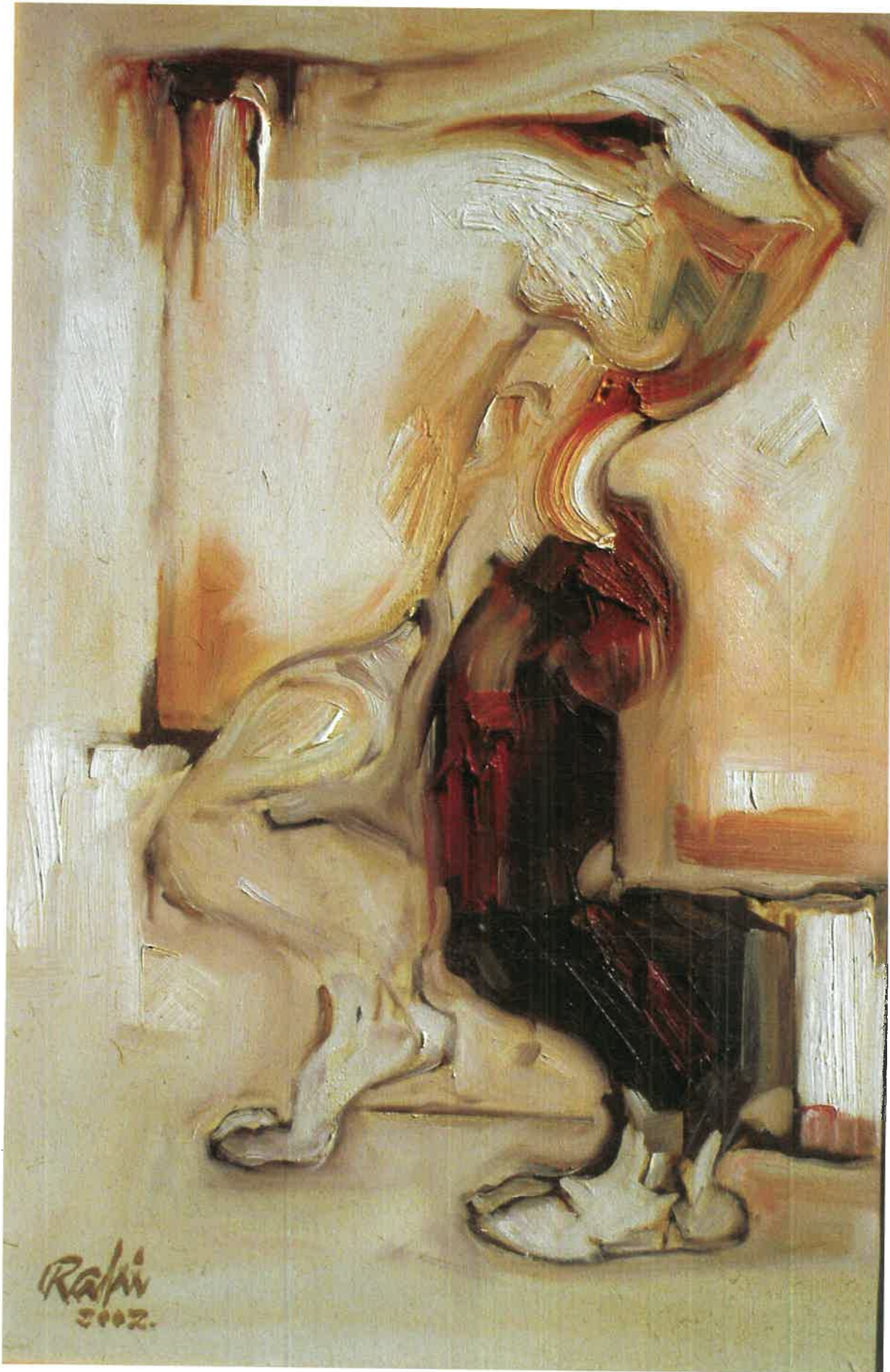
Human Form - 2001



Human Form - 2001



Two Faces - 2001



Human Form - 2002



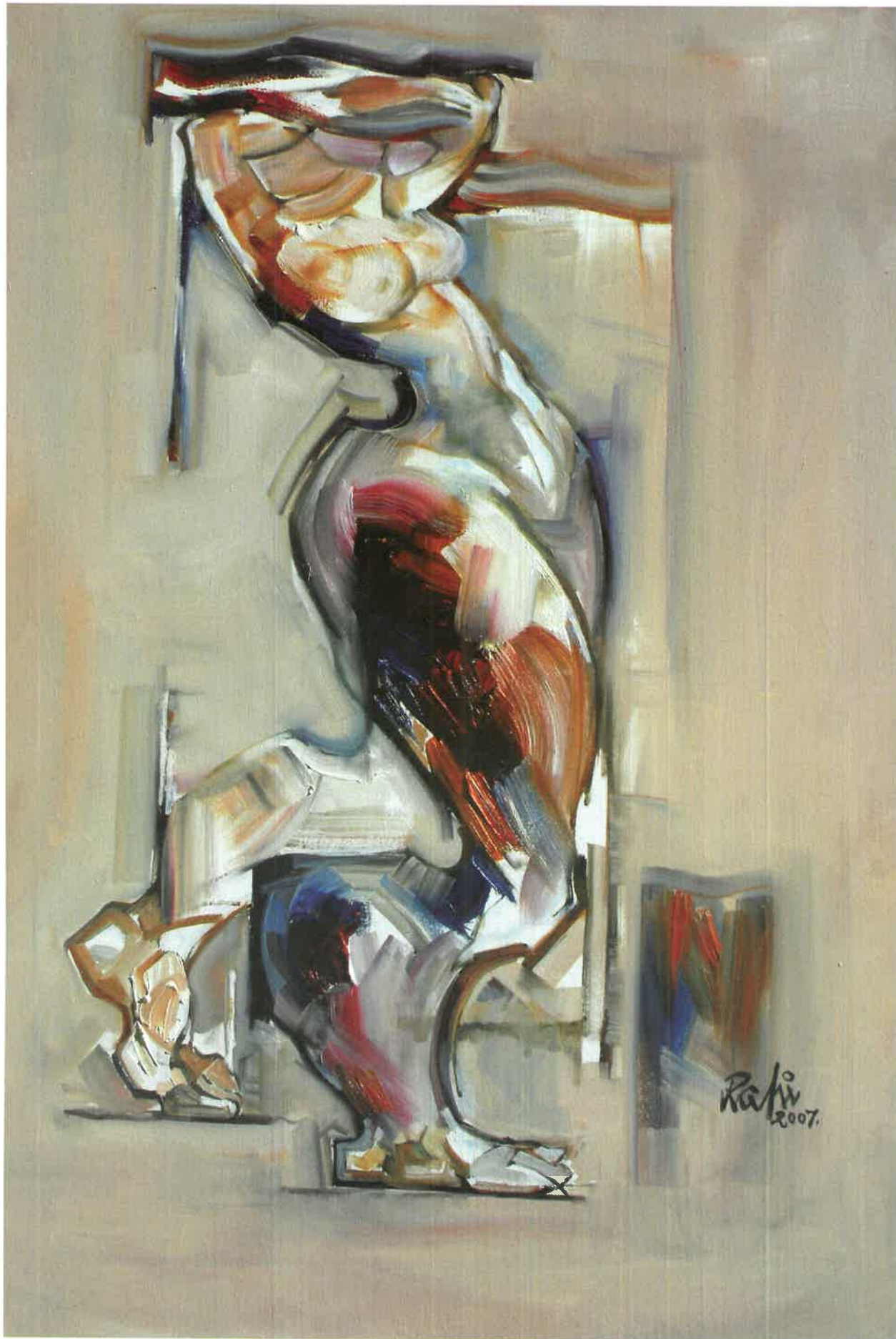
Lady And The Bird - 2002



Two Faces - 2002



Human Form - 2006



Human Form - 2007



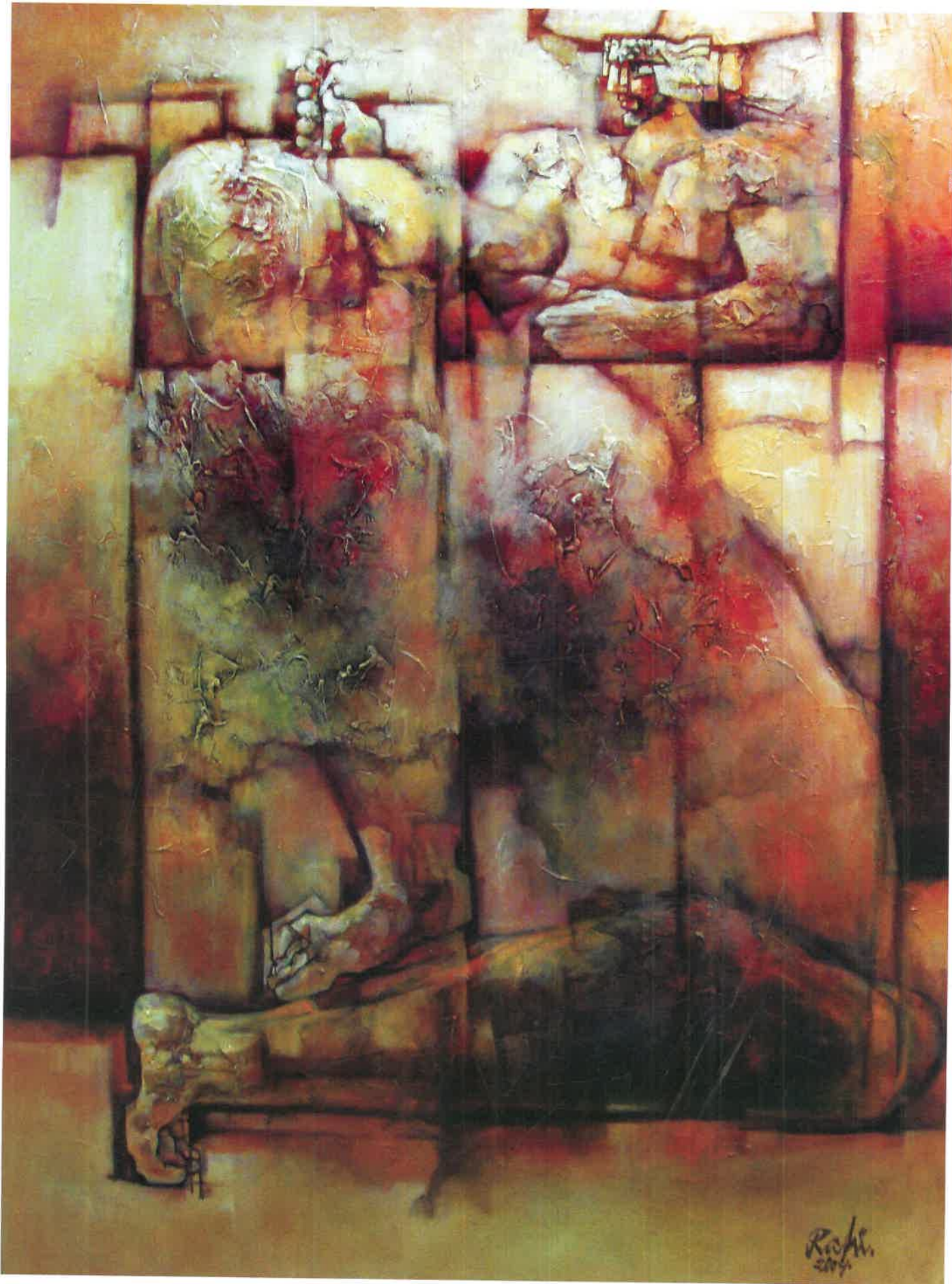
The Blue King - 2007



The Queen of Shambula - 2007



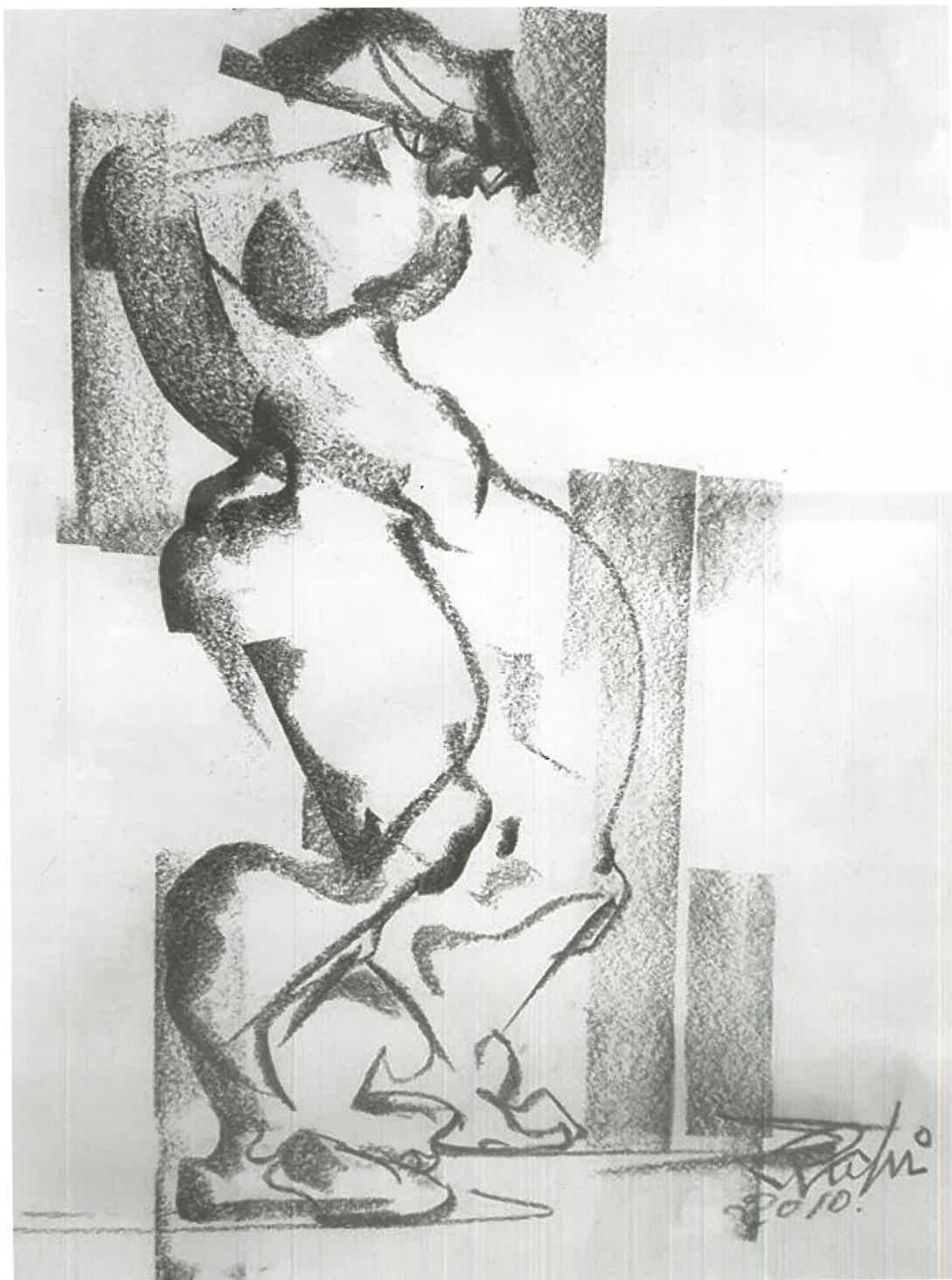
Queen of Kings - 2007



King of Queens - 2007



Human Form - Charcoal, 2010



Human Form - Charcoal, 2010

VII

FINAL FANTASISM

[2014 - SUSTAINED]



Invisible Terror - 2014



Invisible Terror - 2014



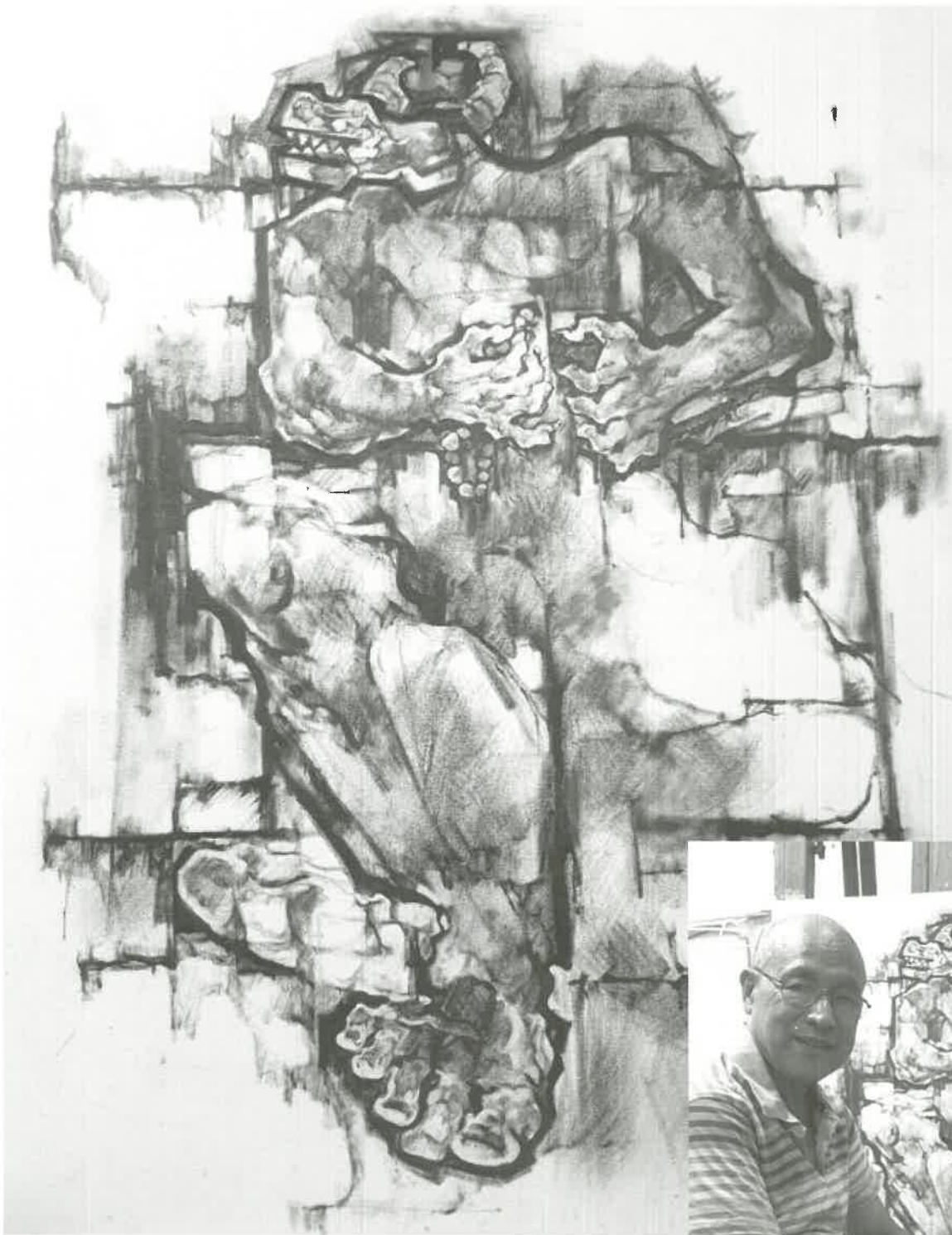
Bull of Valencia - 2015



Beyond Human - 2016



Human Beast (Series) - 2016



Human Beast (Series) - 2016

CHAPTER - VII

MEGA OBJECTS BY RAHI MURALS & COMMISSIONS



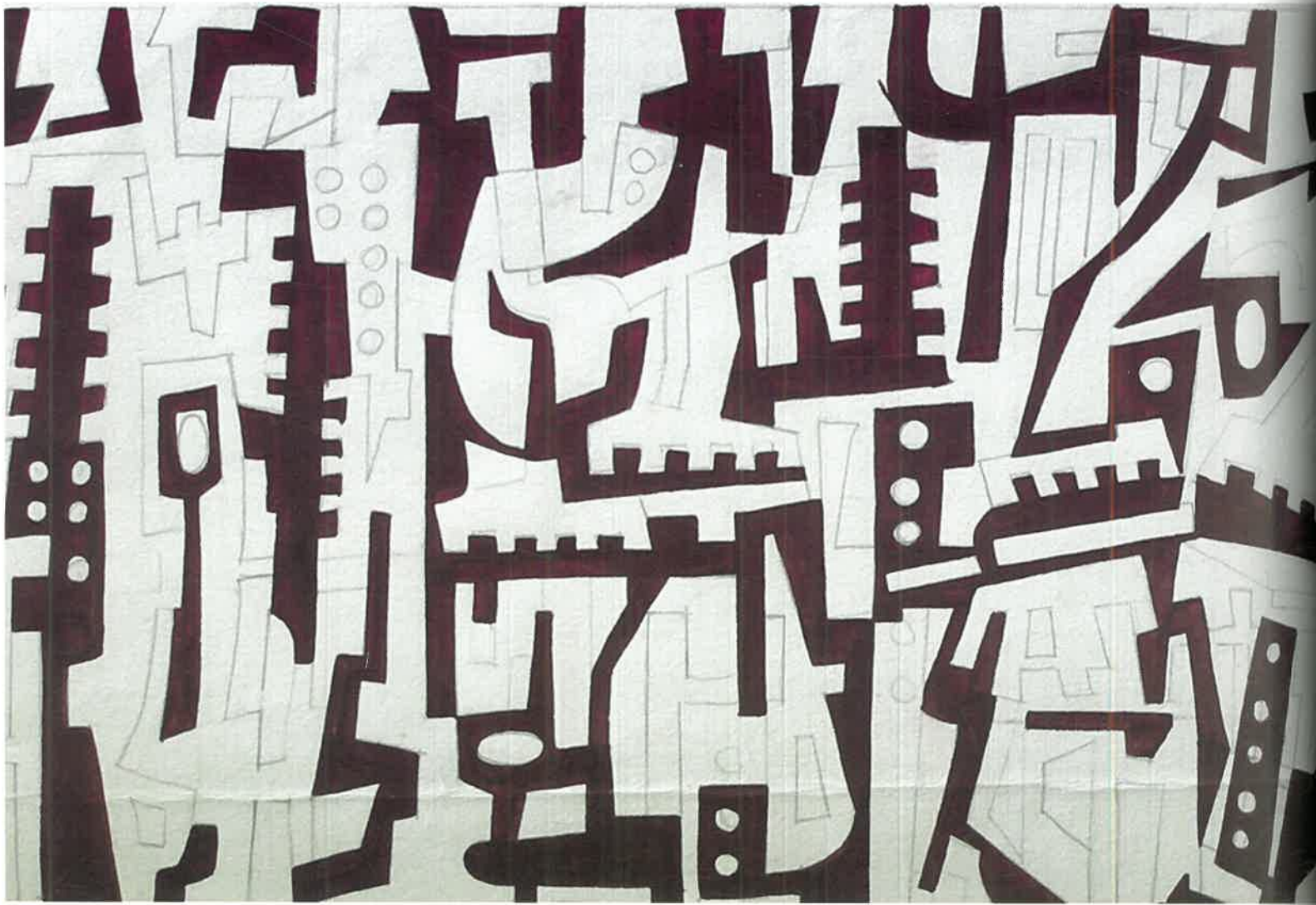


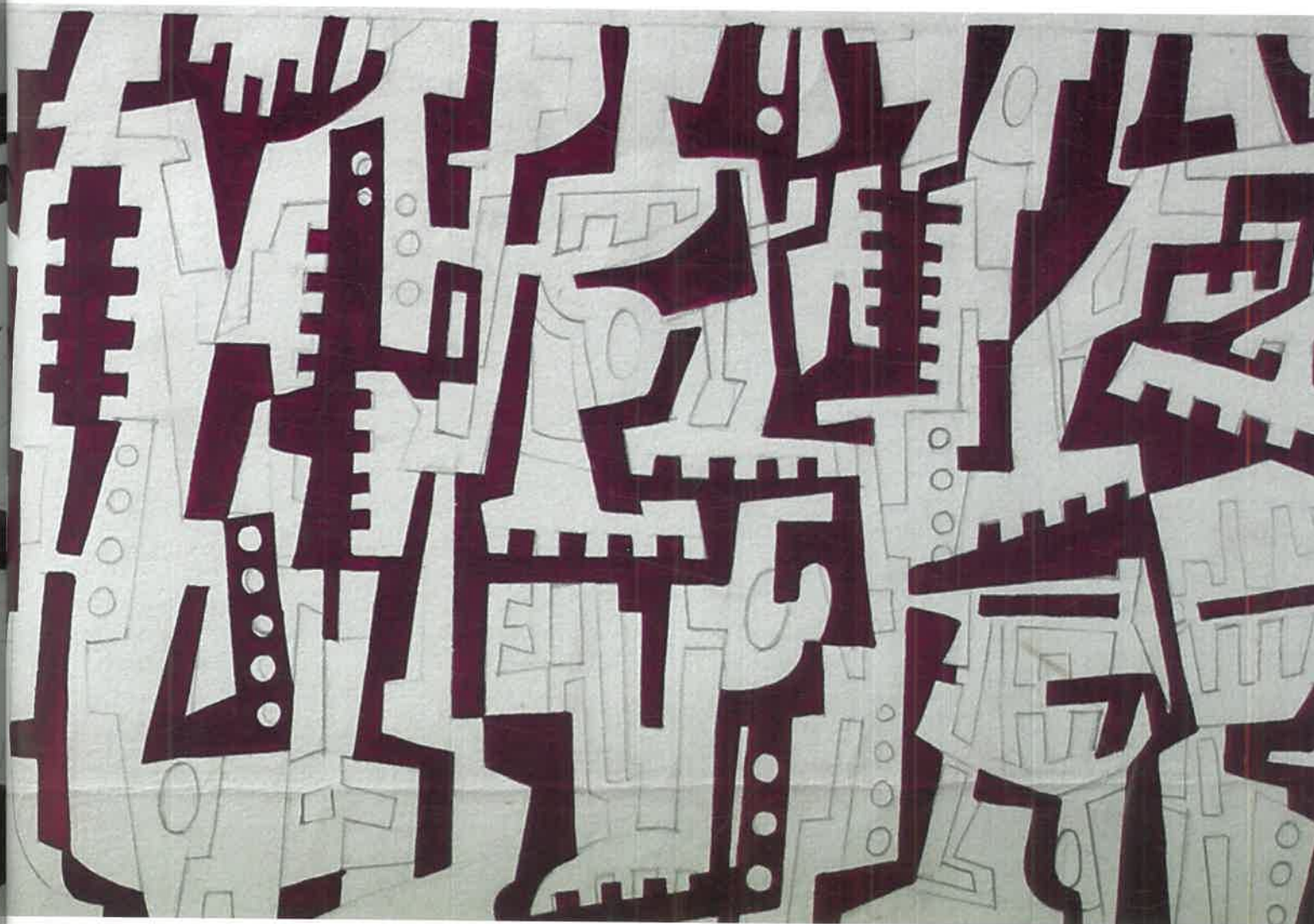


Journey to Enlightenment - Mural - 1966



Evolution - Illuminated Mural Concept - 1969





Evolution - Illuminated Mural Concept - 1969



Prosperity - Mural Concept - 1972



Rahi Working on a Mural - Size: 8ft x 24ft - Rahi Studios - Karachi, 1973



Rahi Working on a Mural - Size: 12ft x 32ft - On Site - Karachi, 1973



Rahi Working on a Public Art - Size: 9ft x 4.5ft (approx) per side - Rahi Studios - Karachi, 1973

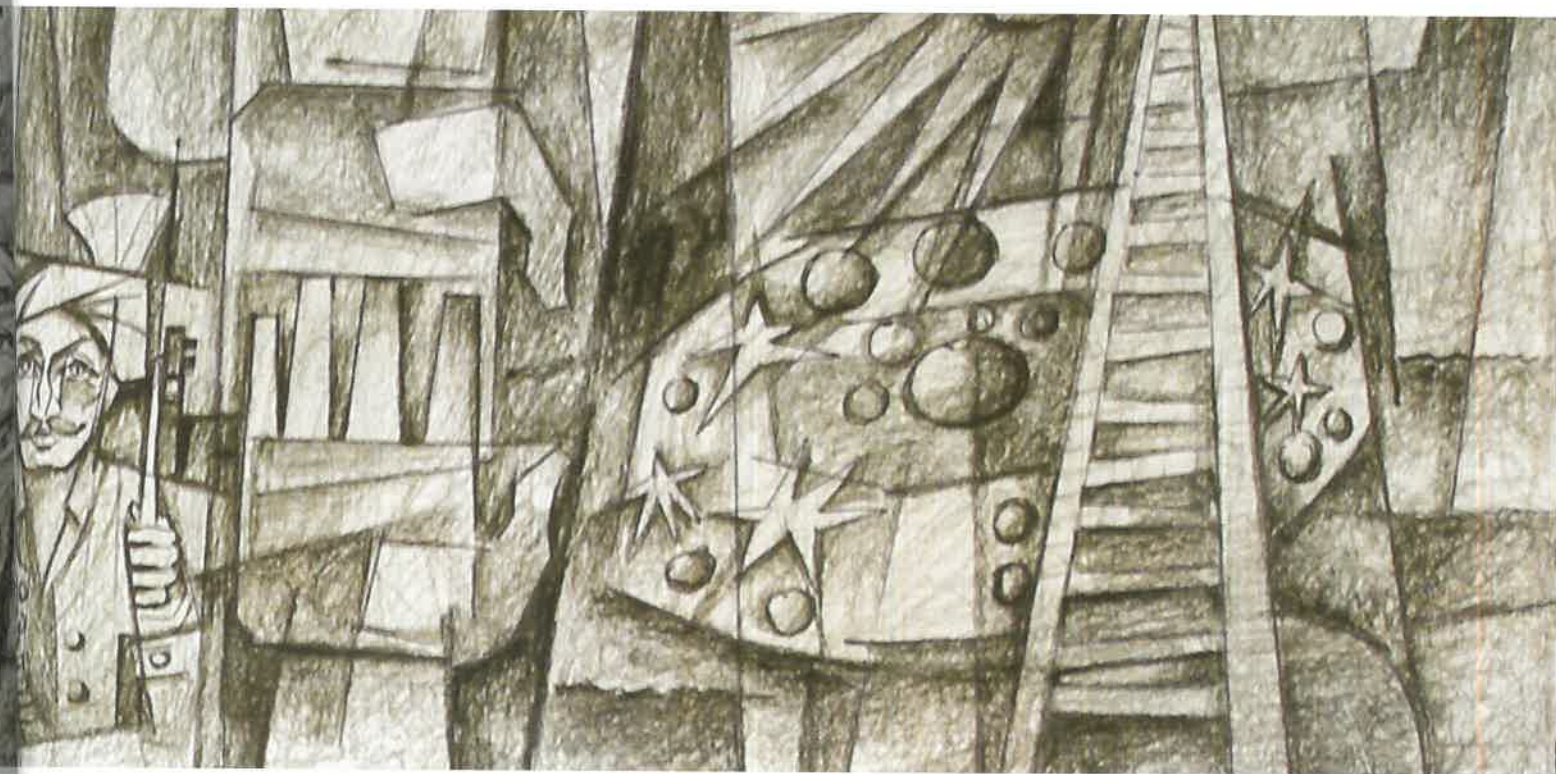


Ceiling Art Concept - 1979





Nation Building - 1987



Unity Faith and Discipline - 1994



Rahi Working on a Mural - Size: 8ft x 32ft - Rahi Studios - Islamabad, 1995



National Development - Mural - Islamabad, 1996



*National Unity
Parliament House of Pakistan, 1997*



*Gandhara Civilization - Gold-Dust Relief
Twin City Museum, 1998*



Public Art for Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology - Approx Size: 24ft x 10ft
Rawalpindi, 1999



*Triumph - Relief Work - Approx Size: 15ft x 12ft
Abbottabad, 2000*



The Gandhara Civilization Monument - Approx Size: 25ft x 35ft - Abbottabad, 2001



Rahi's wife Hajra and dear friend/artist Jahanzeb Malik observe the monument - Abbottabad, 2001



The Gandhara Civilization Monument - Approx Size: 25ft x 35ft - Abbottabad, 2001



The Victory Monument - Approx Size: 18ft x 15ft - Abbottabad, 2003



The Victory Monument - Approx Size: 18ft x 15ft - Abbottabad, 2003



*Rahi directing Pakish Military Personnel during the installation of the Faith First Monument
PMA - Kakul, 2005*



*Pakish Military Personnel Installing the Faith First Monument
PMA - Kakul, 2005*



*The Faith First Monument - Approx Size: 35ft x 12ft
PMA - Kakul, 2005*

THE CONCLUSION

Rah
98.

- THE CONCLUSION -

The world of arts has been evolving since prehistoric times. Mankind has come a long way, from the prehistoric Paleolithic cave paintings to augmented reality and painting robots.



*The Robot-1 developed to explore some of the same questions posed by contemporary artists like Mansoor Rahi and Jackson Pullock: Does art spring from rationality or emotion? What relationship does art have to chaos?
HOW Design Conference, 2014 - Boston Massachusetts - Photo Credit: Danish Rahi*

Since its inception, art has taken many forms and evolved into many different fields. It became the basis for design and various modern fields. The arts and artists have played a key role in shaping the world we live in. They are mainly right-brain thinkers, the misfits looking at things differently. For it is they, who at the end of the day move the human race forward through innovation and creativity, who question the status quo by interjecting new ideas into the world.

By reading this book and viewing the artwork in it, we can better understand how Rahi -- as an artist and art teacher -- has played a key role in changing the social fabric of a society that desperately needed it. For thousands he became a channel to vent out their thoughts and creative energies. Without his impact, their thoughts could have

turned into negative energies, harming themselves, the society and hence the world beyond. In a society where guns can be much cheaper and easier to find than a painting brush, he served a better alternative -- by opening up a world of creativity, positive thinking and artistic discipline. Through his humble teachings, demeanor and paintings, he proved that one can make a difference and convey a point, or send out a message to the entire world -- through art -- and avoid violence in any form.

He enlightened many through his thought-provoking work. He is probably the only Cubist of Asia whose work shows a tangible, conscious, steady, and intelligent evolution over the decades, divided and documented strategically into phases. This evolution of his work serves not only as an important resource for the learners and researchers of arts, but also for the future evolution of Abstract Cubism. Some of his work serves as a window, through which the viewer can see the great shifts from realism into abstraction and the various levels of abstraction. His modern, futuristic and abstract paintings strongly and clearly challenge perceptions regarding not only Pakistan or Bangladesh, but also the entire Asian arts. It represents the strength and diversity of the artists living in the region.

If we look at the scope of his work, Rahi can be seen as an institution, due to the multitude of paintings, technical evolutionary periods and styles, academic and theoretical contributions, as well as his educational contributions as a teacher.

Rahi sees a great need to spread the knowledge of arts. He cautions the world about the lack of priority and resources -- which are essential to art education -- as well as the over-commercialization of the arts without proper understanding. He believes that any form of true art is not only one of the best antidote for chaos and violence that we see spreading around the world, but the technical understanding of it makes societies and people more intelligent, humble and socially conscious.

In the future, Rahi would like to see people comprehend the visual arts better. He hopes to see a basic understanding of good versus bad designs and art appreciation disseminated across the globe. He envisions human civilization becoming more conscious and intelligent with the possession of such knowledge of the arts.

The world will remember Rahi as a key contributor to the style of Cubism and as one of the most influential painters of Pakistan and Asia. But as Rahi always says, the show must go on.



*Rahi with his granddaughter Perize Rahi
Rahi Studios, Islamabad, 2016*

Among the thousands of his students and followers, there is now a fresh little challenger who spends a lot of time in his busy studio, doing her own crazy drawings and paintings. His granddaughter Perize D. Rahi, a talented Pakish-American kid, has already made headlines. She did her first group show at the age of three and successfully threw her debut sold-out solo show at the age of four. Perize, assisted by her parents, is quite active on social media, making herself known as one of the youngest professional artists.

Rahi's learnings and works of Abstract Cubism is not just creative, but it is so visionary that several generations to come may find it modern and futuristic. The beacon of his style will burn for years to come, illuminating the pathways for anyone seeking creative knowledge of any kind and inspire all truth-seekers and change-makers.

Like many great visionaries Rahi have always lived years ahead of his time. He strongly believes that knowledge, understanding and appreciation of any type of art simply makes you a better human. He hopes to see new and emerging digital mediums playing a key role in spreading art education, and making the world a more peaceful place for all.



*Many of Rahi's items are secured as collectibles and souvenirs by his followers worldwide
Rahi's Painted Palette - converted to a souvenir - New York, USA, 2015*

RAHI

THE CUBIST LEGEND OF ASIA

LIFE AND WORK OF MANSOOR RAHI

This must-have book is a key resource about the life and work of a great Asian master, Mansoor Rahi. His groundbreaking periods and styles over the decades show the evolution of an eminent abstract-cubist from the heart of Asia. It is the first-ever resource revealing the great master's mystical dimensions and telling his mesmerizing story, which spans over half a century of adventures, battles, achievements and glory.

Perhaps even more importantly, the book exposes the mind and thought process of an Asian legend who introduced modernist philosophy and modern art to a region of the world that remained isolated from such concepts until his arrival. Through his art, Rahi served as the hidden bridge connecting the Eastern and Western worlds. Opening up the minds of millions he exposed the modernist ideas and processes that originated from deep inside Asia.

"Rahi: The Cubist Legend of Asia" is a captivating journey that will leave you enlightened and spellbound.



THE RAHI GROUP

TAGARI
WHERE IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

ISBN 978-0-692-92868-4

US\$49.99

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