

LAHORE ART CIRCLE

“Art in Pakistan”

BFA-IV (Visual Arts)

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Institute of Design & Visual Arts, LCWU

LAHORE ART CIRCLE

- The modern art of Pakistan from 1947-57, more specifically, the role of six important artists founded the Lahore Art Circle (LAC) in 1952. The group played a pivotal role in the formulation of modernism in Pakistan after its establishment as an Islamic Republic. Framed within postcolonial theories and criticism, it addressed the role of modern art in developing new artistic sensibilities in the nation of Pakistan. These artists fused “modernism” and “nationalism” in terms of specific historic and hybrid link. These founding members of the Lahore Art Circle includes:
 1. Shakir Ali (1924-1975),
 2. Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983),
 3. Moyene Najmi (1926-1997),
 4. Ali Imam (1924-2000),
 5. Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979) and
 6. Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928-1985).
- These five artists of the Lahore Art Circle are also known as ‘Punj Pyaray’. Because of their talent they won the heart of Shakir Ali and as a result were given this title.

LAHORE ART CIRCLE

- Works of these individual artists and the role of Lahore Art Circle during the first decade of the establishment of Pakistan as a nation-state, helps to understand the specific condition of modernism in Pakistan that was dictated by these artists' careers and works. They investigated modernism on highly personal, international, emerging national and distinctly local forms in the early years of the Pakistan after the Partition of 1947. Their work delivered a dialogue between constructing a newly established Pakistani identity within the larger paradigms of international modernism.
- All of these artists are known as abstract painters, initially inspired by the works of Shakir Ali which he produced under the influence of Cubism but later on all developed their individual identity in terms of style and subject. They advocated progressive approach and therefore also remembered as the progressive group of artists.
- In the words of Amina Cheema (an art critic, artist and art educationist):
“The intellectual tea houses of post partition time were frequented by a number of creative souls who sat together and exchanged ideas with each other giving birth to a generation. It was that generation who favored modernity and progressiveness and took part in laying the foundation of modernism in Pakistani arts and culture”.

ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)



ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)

- Anwar Jalal Shemza was an artist and writer active in Pakistan and later the United Kingdom. He was born into a Kashmiri and Punjabi family in Shimla, India, in 1928, who owned a carpet and military embroidery business in Ludhiana. He received his education from Shimla, Ludhiana and Lahore. In 1943, he got admission in Punjab University to study Persian, Arabic and philosophy, but in 1944, due to his growing interest in arts he switched to Mayo School of Art. He was awarded a Commercial Art Diploma with distinction in 1947.
- After receiving diploma, he establishes a design studio in Lahore. Simultaneously works for the Government of Pakistan Public Relations Department, designing propaganda pamphlets, cinema slides, press layouts and magazine illustrations, and for the Visual Aids Section of the Education Department, creating a series of posters that promote adult education.
- Despite being better known as an artist, Shemza published several Urdu novels and books of poetry in the 1950s. He wrote scripts for various stations of Radio Pakistan in the form of art and architecture programming and productions for children. From 1950-1953, he designed and edited *Ehsas*, an Urdu fortnightly periodical on art and literature.
- During the period of 1953–56, four of Shemza's novels were published in Urdu and achieved widespread recognition for literary and artistic endeavors as a member of the Lahore intelligentsia.
- He was among the founding members of the Lahore Art Circle, which was concerned with modernism and abstraction.

ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)

- He participated in several solo and group exhibitions throughout Pakistan. Appointed head of the art department at Lawrence College, Public School for Boys, Ghora Gali and Cathedral High School, Lahore.
- He wanted to enhance his visual vocabulary as an artist, and with quest in 1956, he moved to London for further study at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. Upon arrival in the UK, his Pakistani artistic achievements were not recognized. His encounter with modernism most notably with the works of Paul Klee provided him the initial route to broaden his artistic endeavor. Paul Klee assumed a major significance at that time, the outcome of which was reflected in his drawing using ink on the surface.
- In 1959, he received a British Council scholarship to study on an advanced course in printmaking at the Slade School of Fine Art, which concentrated on etching and was led by Anthony Gross. In the same year, he exhibited his solo at New Vision Centre, London and in 1960 at Gallery One, London. This time, a new series, 'City Walls', attains a new compositional density by using layers of squares and circles.
- While in Britain, he married English artist Mary Katrina. The couple moved to Pakistan in 1960.

ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)

- Despite some exhibitions and critical acclaim, Shemza was forced to work for an advertising firm in Karachi. Dissatisfied with this scenario, Shemza returns to the UK with his family the same year.
- Settled in Stafford, he worked as an arts teacher at Ounsdale High School between 1962 and 1979 at Weston Road High School as head of art and design between 1979 and 1985.
- He continued his practice besides his jobs during evenings and weekends. Following an introduction to John Coleman, color printmaking became a major focus in his practice. In 1961, he began working on the Magic Carpet and Chessmen series. He had a number of international exhibitions over the next decade focusing on drawing (Yugoslavia during 1963–70), printing (Japan during 1962–68; Austria in 1963; Switzerland in 1967) and engraving (Argentina during 1968–72).
- In 1963, he started to form two major bodies of work: Fingerprint and Square Compositions. Wrote a major statement on his development as an artist, which was published in the catalogue accompanying a solo exhibition, *A J Shemza: Paintings, Drawings, 1957–1964*, at the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archaeology, Durham.
- In 1965, he used pyrography for the first time in his work and later in 1980's he also used this technique in his practice.

ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)

- His style and visual vocabulary kept on evolving with the infusion of both eastern elements and western methodology. In 1967, he worked on *Meem* series by engaging script for the first time by transforming the first letter of the Prophet Muhammad's name into a simple composition. His sense of design helped him throughout in his artistic journey to create simple yet appealing compositions. Abstract in appearance, his work had emblematic gesture which was readable if approached from eastern notions.
- In 1969, he began working on the Love Letters series. Whereas in 1971, he experimented with silkscreen which becomes a major focus in the Women series.
- In 1977, he developed the Roots series by elaborated the calligraphic abstraction of the earlier *Meem* paintings. The series was spirited with all the elements that helped him create a strong connection with his roots back home. The use of calligraphic script, roots themselves as a metaphor and the surface of the artist making a connection with carpet making (his fore-father's profession)
- In 1985, he died of a sudden heart attack in Stafford, unable to fulfil wish of returning home and retiring to the foothills of Kashmir. This desire is reflected in the drawing, *Dream Home* (1984–85), that Shemza worked on the day before he died. Solo exhibitions of the Roots series toured at venues in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar after his death.

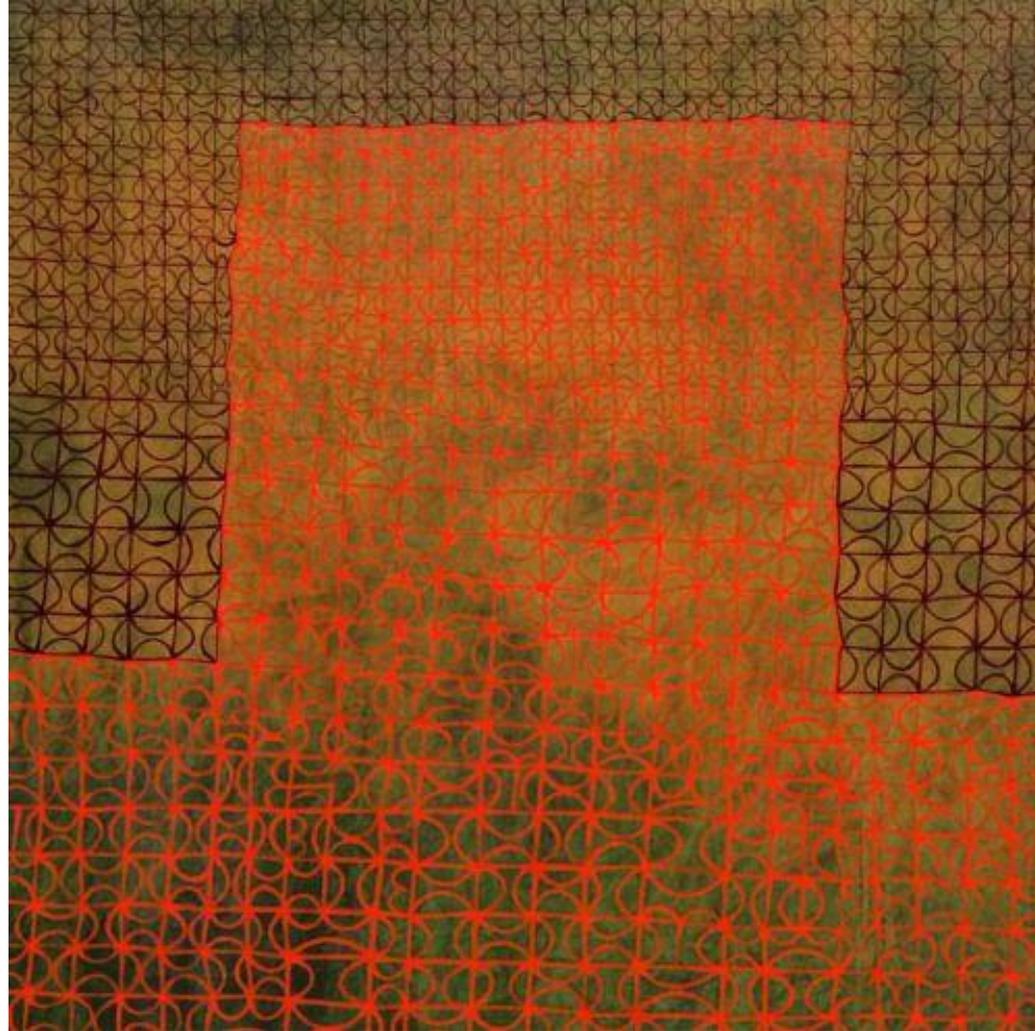
ANWAR JALAL SHEMZA (1928-1985)

- In 1989, his work was Included in *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*, a major exhibition demonstrating an alternative to the mainstream Western artistic canon of modern art, curated by Rasheed Araeen, at the Hayward Gallery, London. The cover of the exhibition catalogue includes a reproduction of *The Wall* by Shemza.
- In 1997, The first major UK retrospective of his work opens at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
- From 2007–12, Anita Dawood and Hammad Nasar of Green Cardamom, London represent the Estate of Anwar Jalal Shemza. The gallery presented two solo exhibitions *Calligraphic Abstraction*, curated by Iftikhar Dadi (2009), and *The British Landscape*, curated by Rachel Garfield (2010). Also included in the group exhibition *Migrations: Journeys into British Art*, at Tate Britain, London in 2012, which revisits the themes of *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*.
- From 2012–15, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai represents the Estate of Anwar Jalal Shemza. A selection of Square Compositions was displayed at the gallery's solo stand at Art Dubai (2014). Shown in numerous international group exhibitions, including *Burning Down the House*, 10th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju and *Trajectories: 19th–21st Century Printmaking from India and Pakistan*, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah (both 2014). A solo *BP Spotlight* display opened at Tate Britain in October 2015, which includes paintings and prints drawn from the Tate's collection.
- From 2017-present day, Shemza's work is featured in *South Asian Modernists* at the Whitworth, Manchester and *Speech Acts* at Manchester Art Gallery.

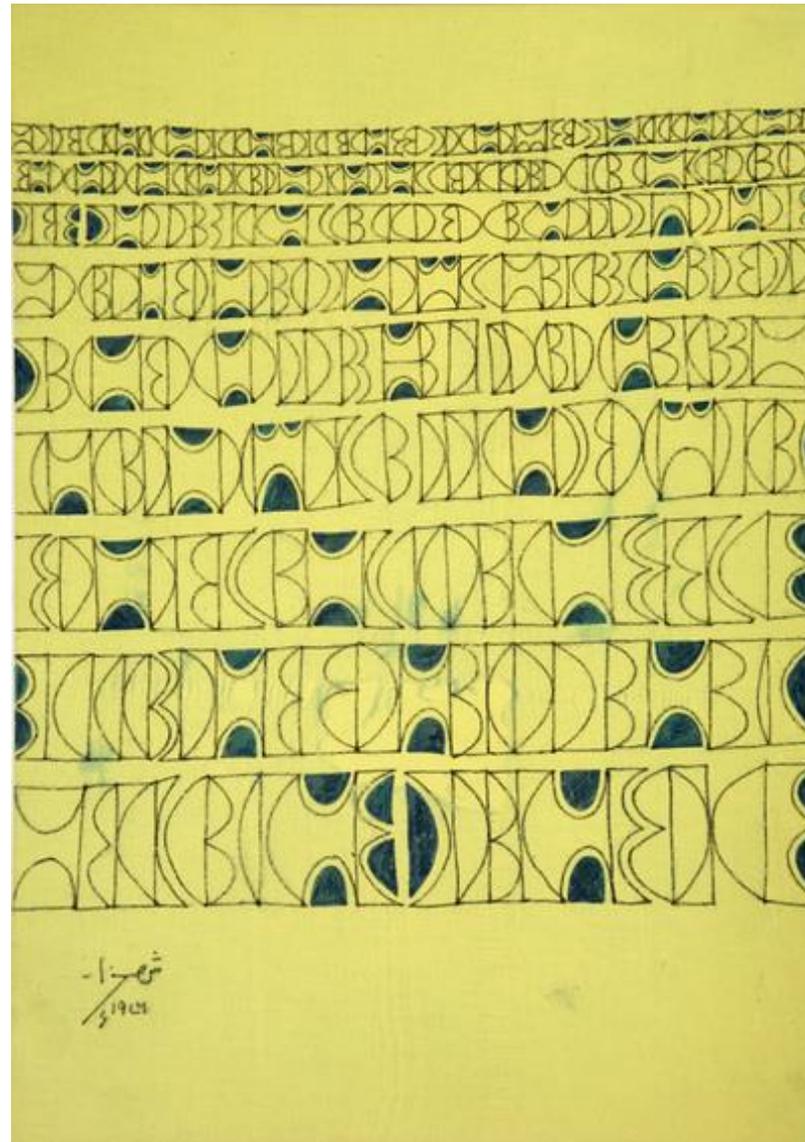
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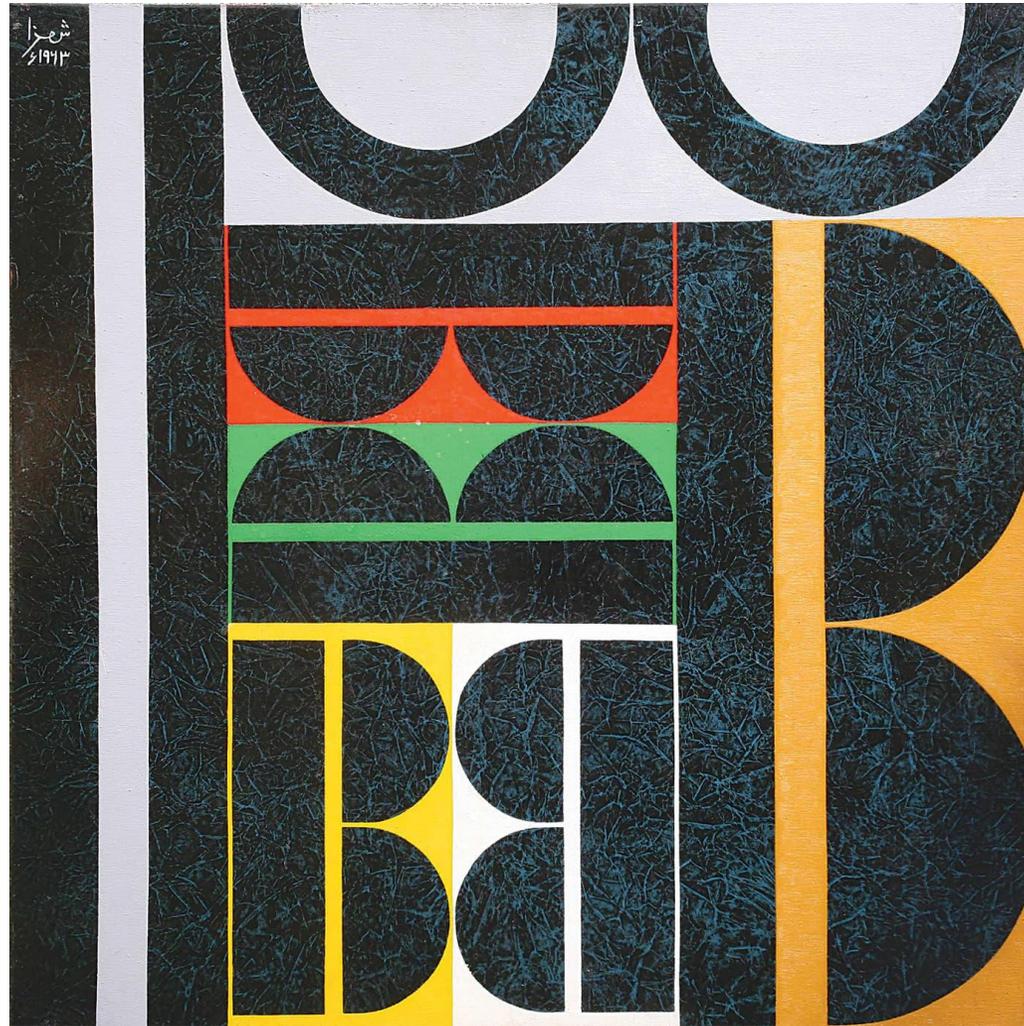
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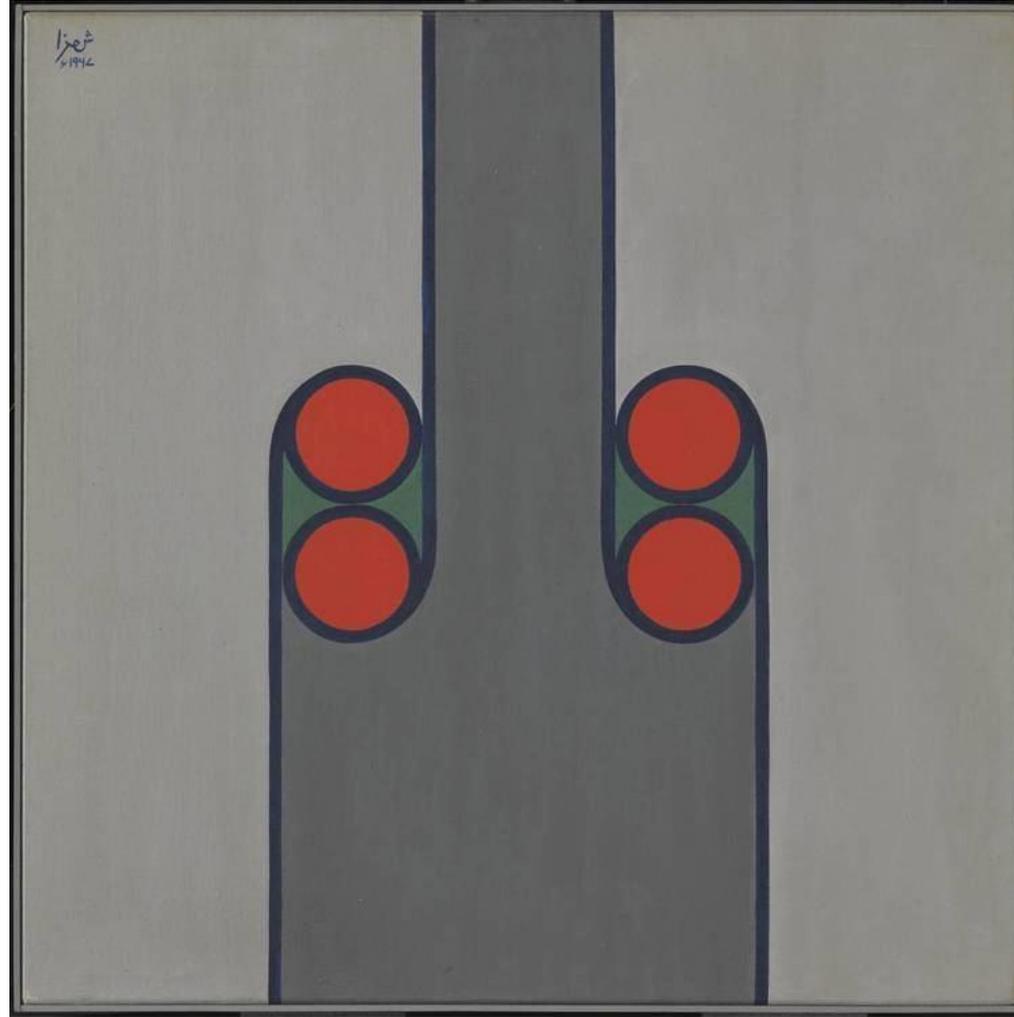
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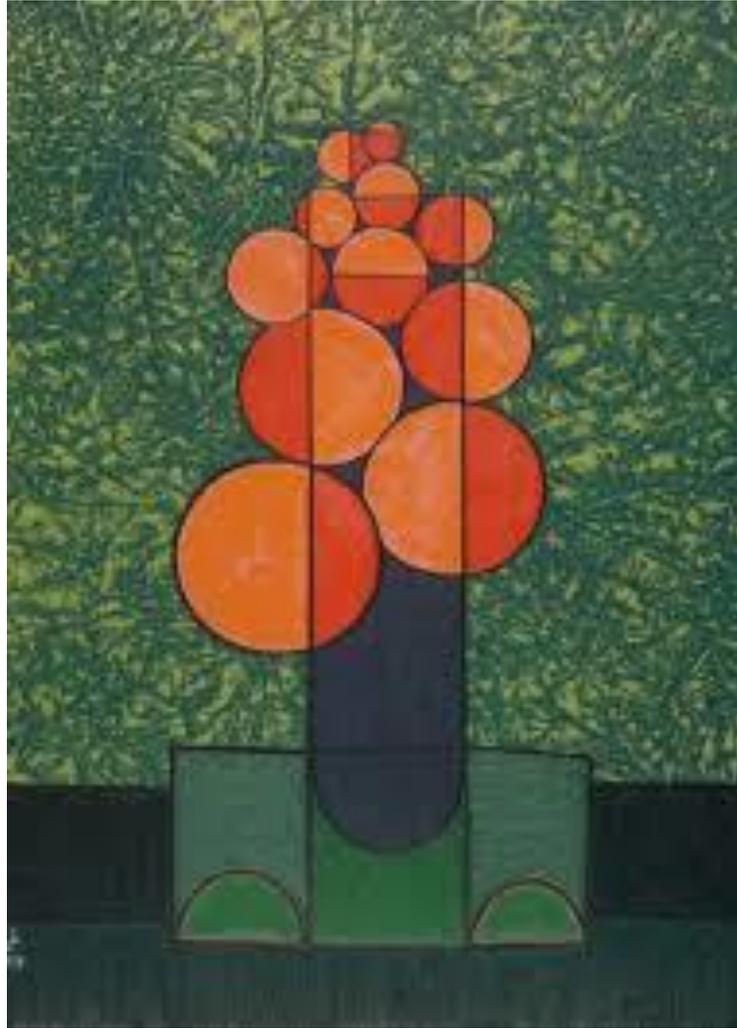
Meem Series



Meem Series



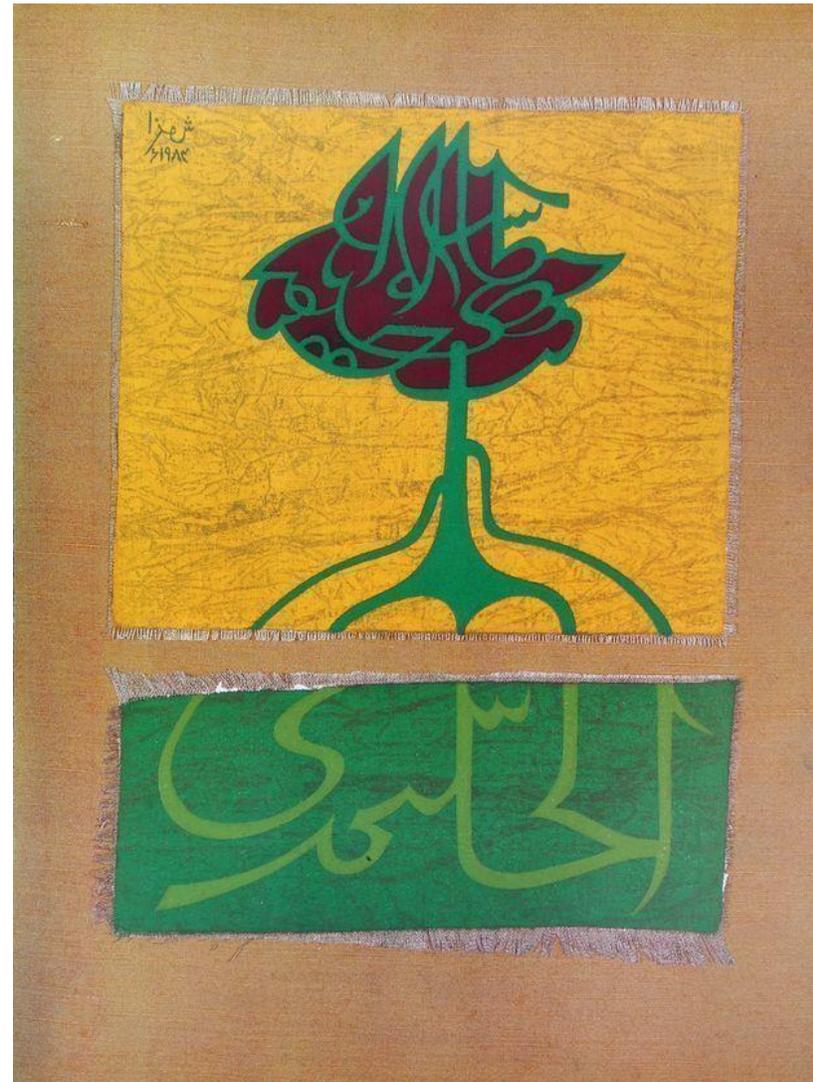
Meem Series



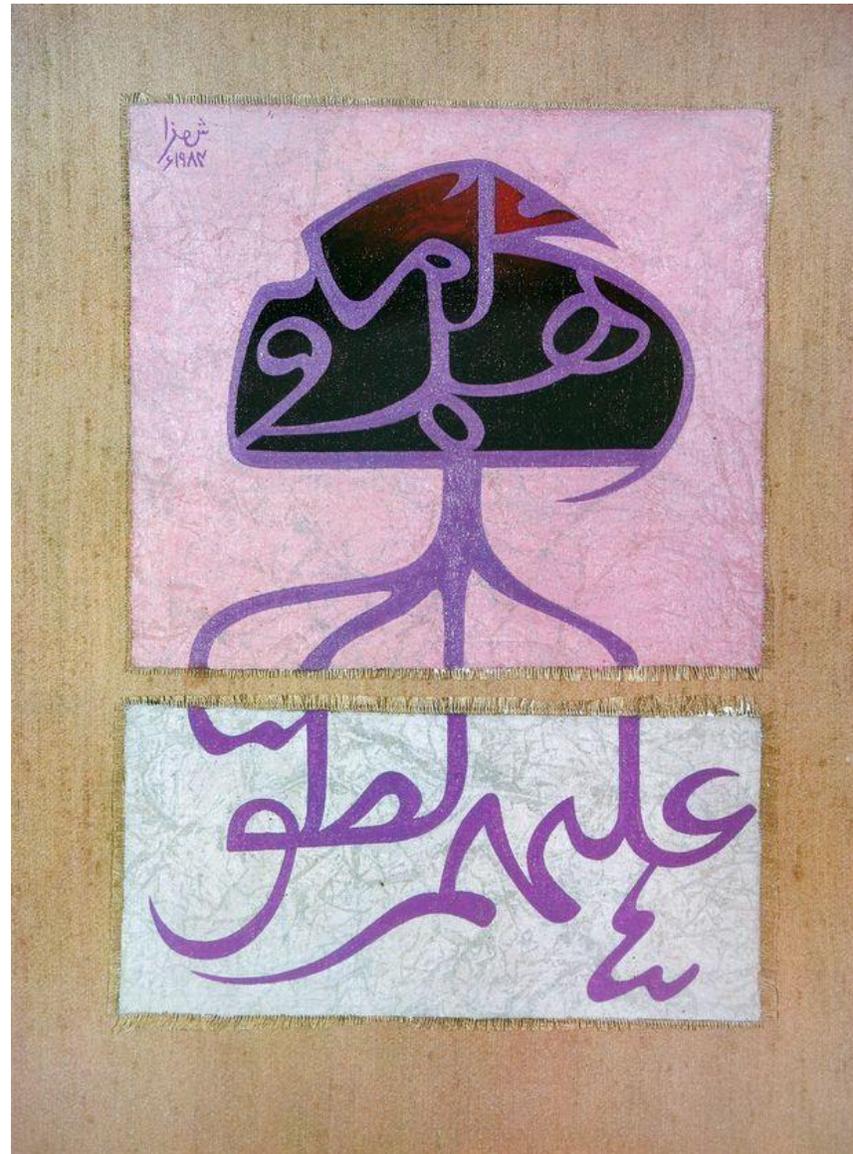
Roots Series



Roots Series



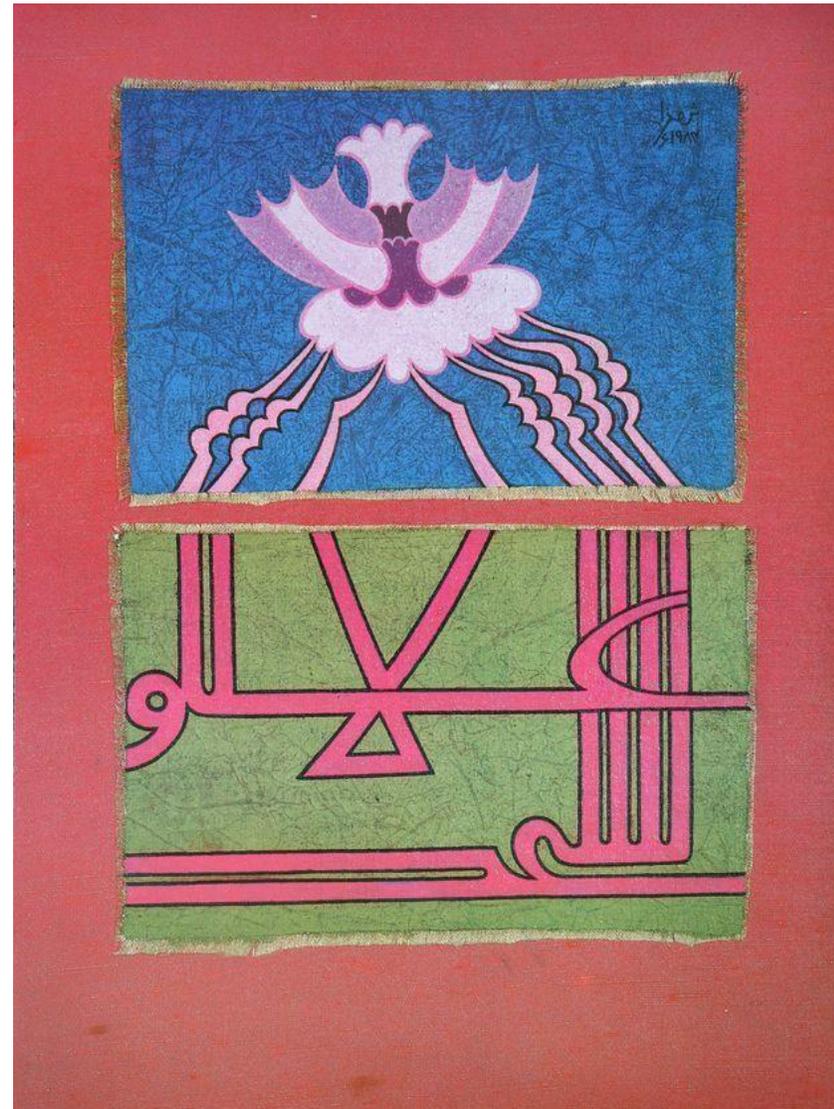
Roots Series



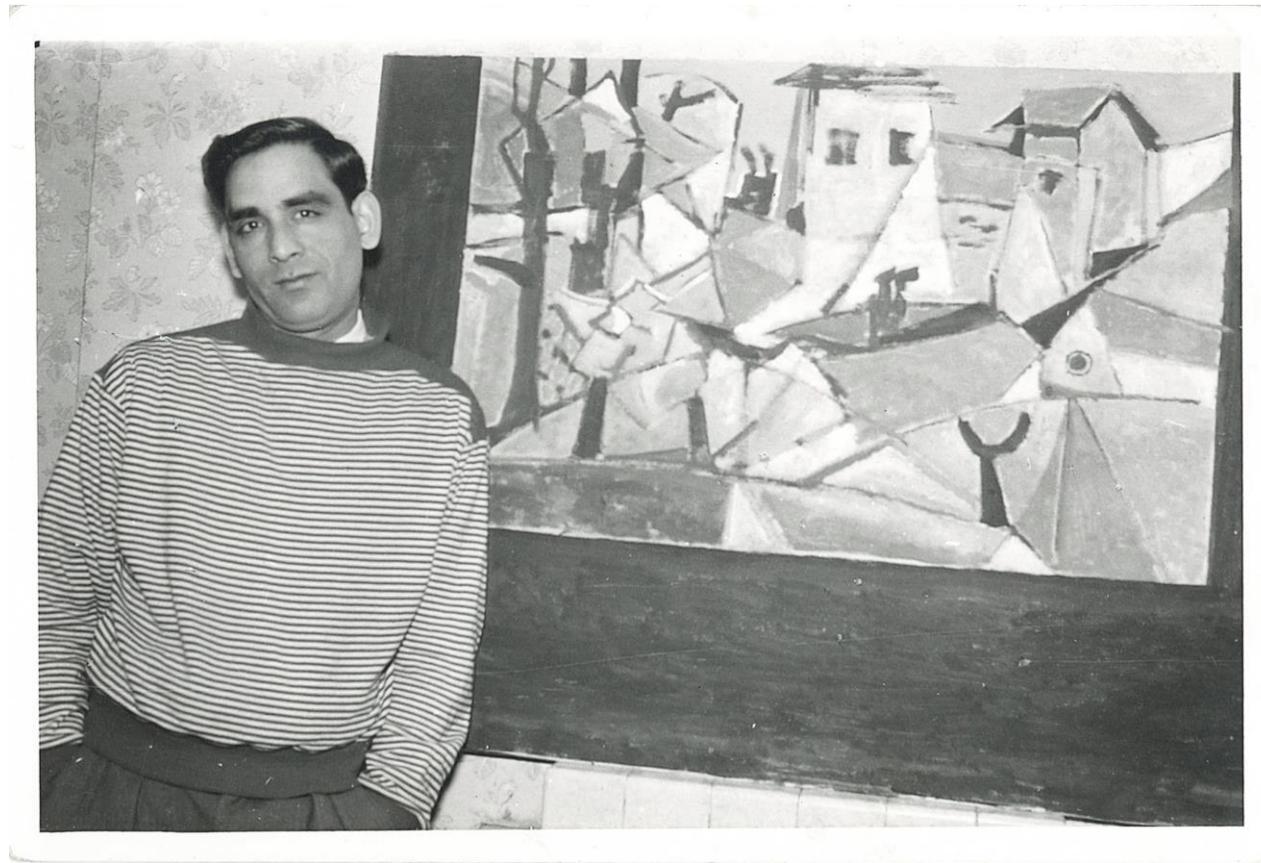
Roots Series



Roots Series



AHMED PARVEZ (1926-1979)



AHMED PARVEZ (1926-1979)

- Ahmed Parvez was one of the remarkable, emotional, and passionate artist who received widespread acclaim abroad in England.
- Ahmed Parvez was a modernist painter from Rawalpindi, Pakistan. He was a member of The Lahore Art Circle in Pakistan and founder of the Pakistan Group in London. He was also among the few early modernists of Pakistani origin to have received considerable critical acclaim, with solo exhibitions at the New Vision, Lincoln, and Clement Stephens galleries in London, along with exhibitions at London's Commonwealth Institute and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford between 1952-64.
- He was a self taught artist, just twenty four years old when he was awarded the University Shield for Men at the annual All Punjab Art Exhibition. His contribution had been pastel pictures worked with children's chalk on printed newspaper.
- Being a founding member of Lahore Art Circle, he studied contemporary art with Shakir Ali, and after exhibiting his work in major cities in Pakistan, he set off for London in 1955; but he was to undergo years of frustration before his work was shown at a major gallery. When it happened his solo exhibition elicited encouraging reviews from the Press: The Times, Guardian, The Arts Review and Victor Musgrove. Dom Moraes wrote: *"The delicate and strange paintings of Mr. Parvez remind me of no one as much as Klee; but there is a certain weirdness, and, as it were, tapering off into another reality about these paintings that is wholly his own"*.

AHMED PARVEZ (1926-1979)

- Paradoxically, just when success beckoned Parvez, after undergoing years of struggle turned his back on London and returned to Pakistan. Unlike Shemza who lived in relative anonymity in London Parvez came back to Pakistan in the mid-60s, left again within two years for New York where his solo was held at Gallery International in 1968.
- In Pakistan, Parvez's work received admiration; he was primarily a colorist with a very personal, vibrant, explosive approach. The lyrical, linear beauty he painted was far beyond the 'decorative'. His volatile personality earned him detractors, but there was no greater critic of Ahmed Parvez's work than the artist himself.
- He finally returned to Karachi in 1969 and continued his stormy existence. Overdue state recognition came through a Pride of Performance in 1978 but after his tragic death in 1979 his works, frozen in private collections, have rarely come forth in extended displays for exhaustive explorations.
- He was the first and only artist at that time to live an artist's life, depending on the sale of his work and following the path of a Bohemian. Perhaps for this reason the award that should have been his years earlier was late in coming. In 1978, he was awarded the President's Medal for Pride of Performance, but the end was in sight, some months later he died of a brain hemorrhage in 1979.

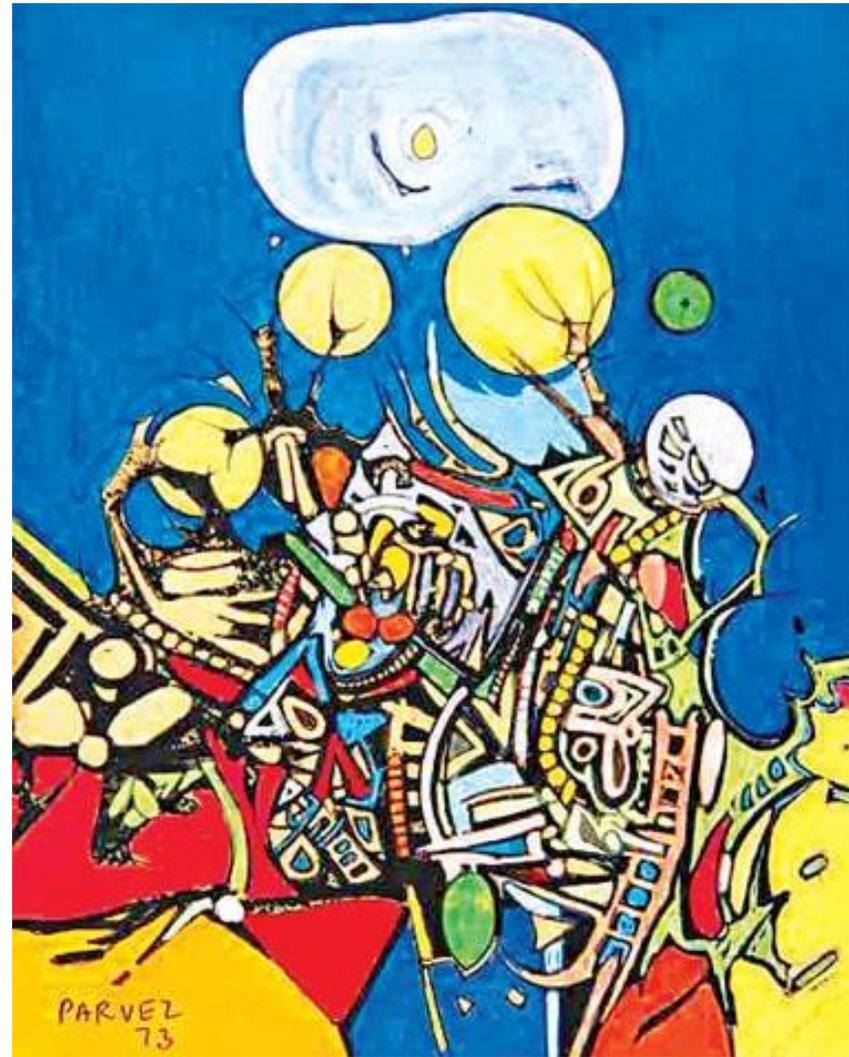
AHMED PARVEZ (1926-1979)

- Ahmed Parvez used straight curved arcs and ellipses abundantly. In certain moods, these curves turn into a series of angular lines in a rugged manner under cubist influence. The range of color was vivacious and his scale was relatively small.
- Ali Imam wrote in 1979 that *“Ahmed Parvez has held over 30 solo exhibitions in Europe, US and Pakistan. He is undoubtedly our most exhibited Pakistani painter abroad”*.
- George Butcher Acknowledged his paintings to be *“art of the highest standard”*, for The Guardian in 1963 that *Three in One (II)* was *“as complete and beautiful a testament to the resolution of the Eastern pattern and Western Tachism as has been accomplished by anyone. The mood is as near to (Paul) Klee as it is to the jeweled ambiance of an Eastern potentate”*.
- The Oxford Mail review of Parvez’s work noted that *“it takes an extremely clear vision or strong personality to impose such an individual character on an abstract or near abstract design. Ben Nicholson, Ivon Hitchens, Jackson Pollock and R.J. Hitchcock are among the few that have it; so is Ahmed Parvez”*.

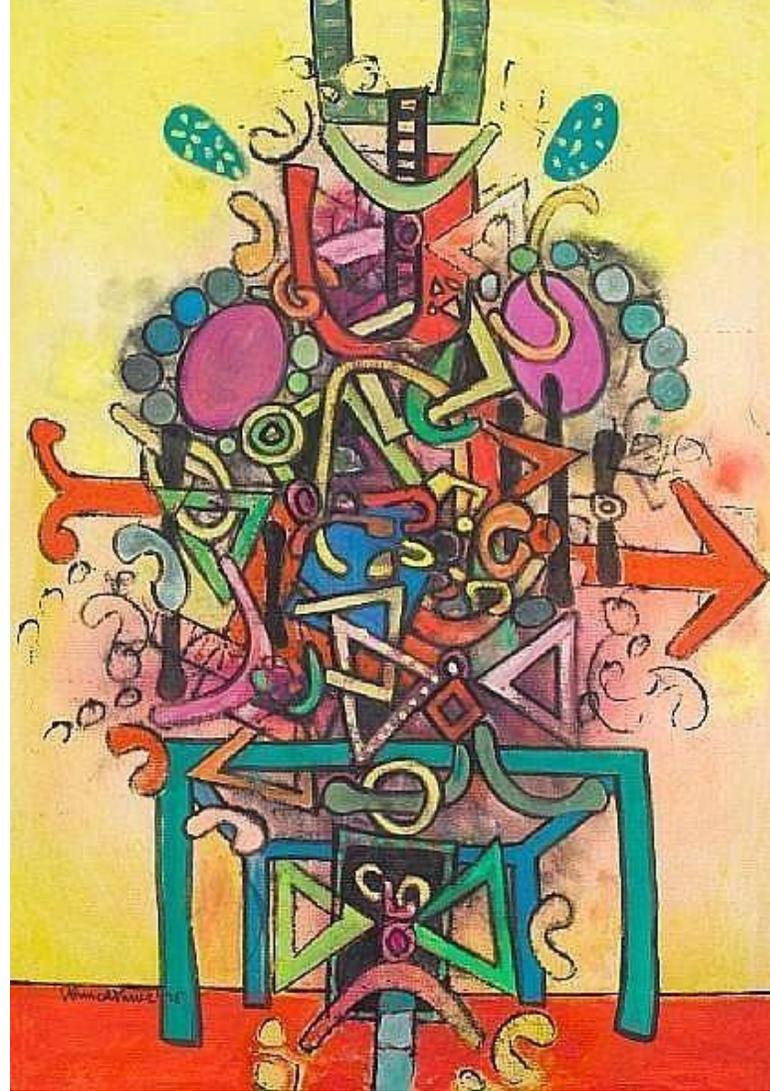
AHMED PARVEZ (1926-1979)

- In the 1950s, Victor Musgrave, a British poet, art dealer and curator of Gallery One, considered Parvez to be *“without question, the outstanding artist from Pakistan who has made a very strong impact upon the English art world. His extension into the West of the ideals implicit in Muslim art has been an effort of unique importance”*.
- His dynamic work is illustrative of competing East meets West energies at play. Parvez remained true to his national identity whilst outside his own country. Parvez felt motivated to increase awareness of the new developments in painting he witnessed in London, and attempted to integrate Modernism into Pakistani art.
- His visual vocabulary embraced modified calligraphic text mostly sprouting out of the vases or pedestal with emphases on geometric designs which seems floating in the air as emblems of celebration.

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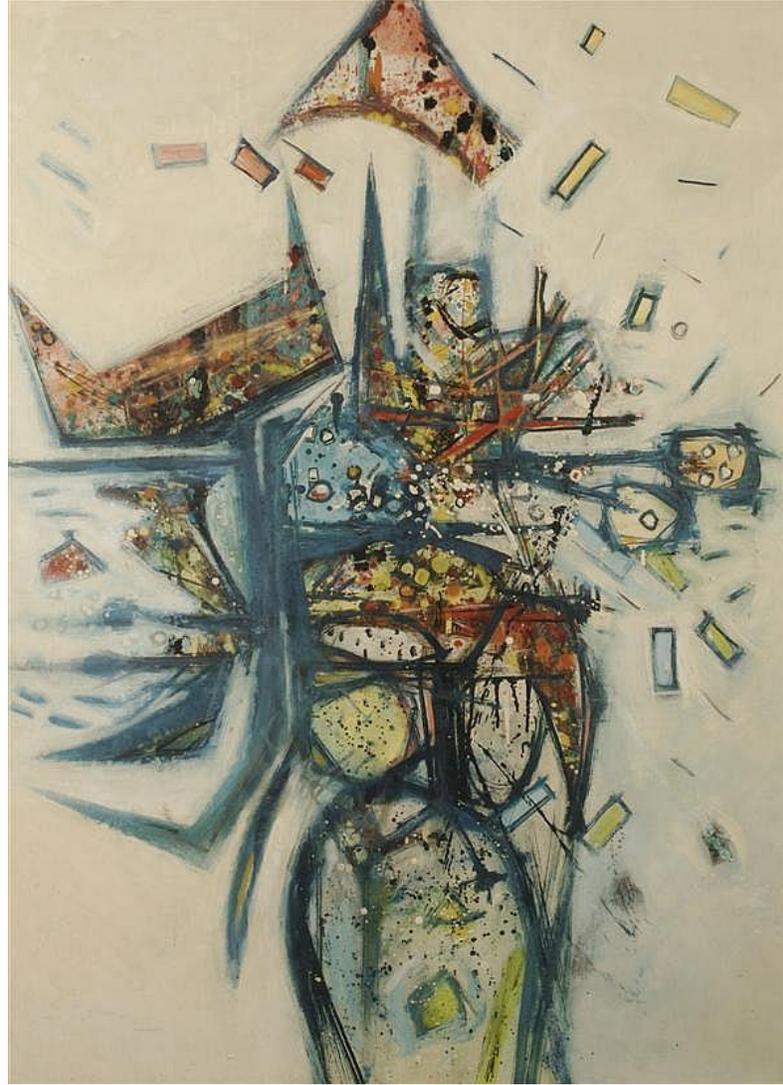
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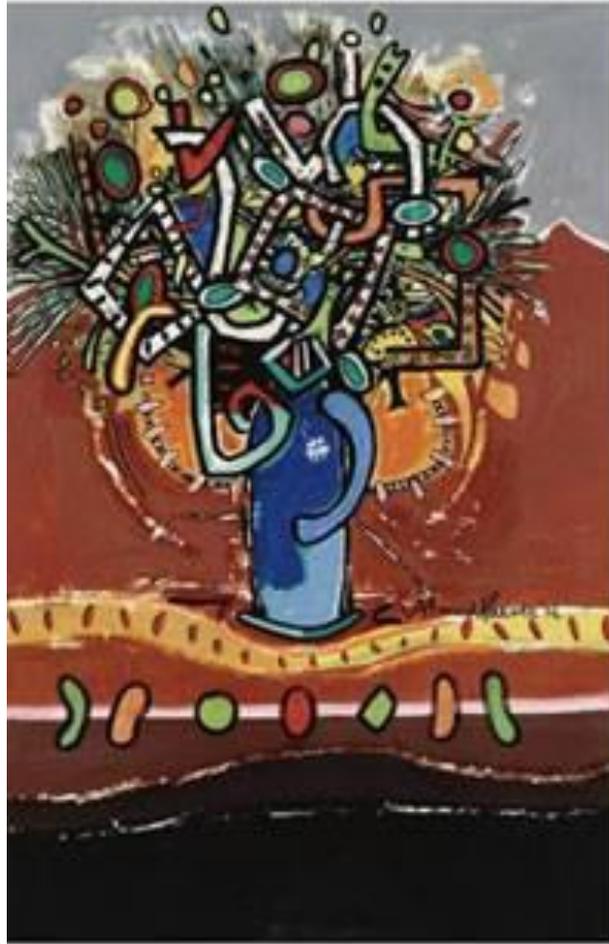
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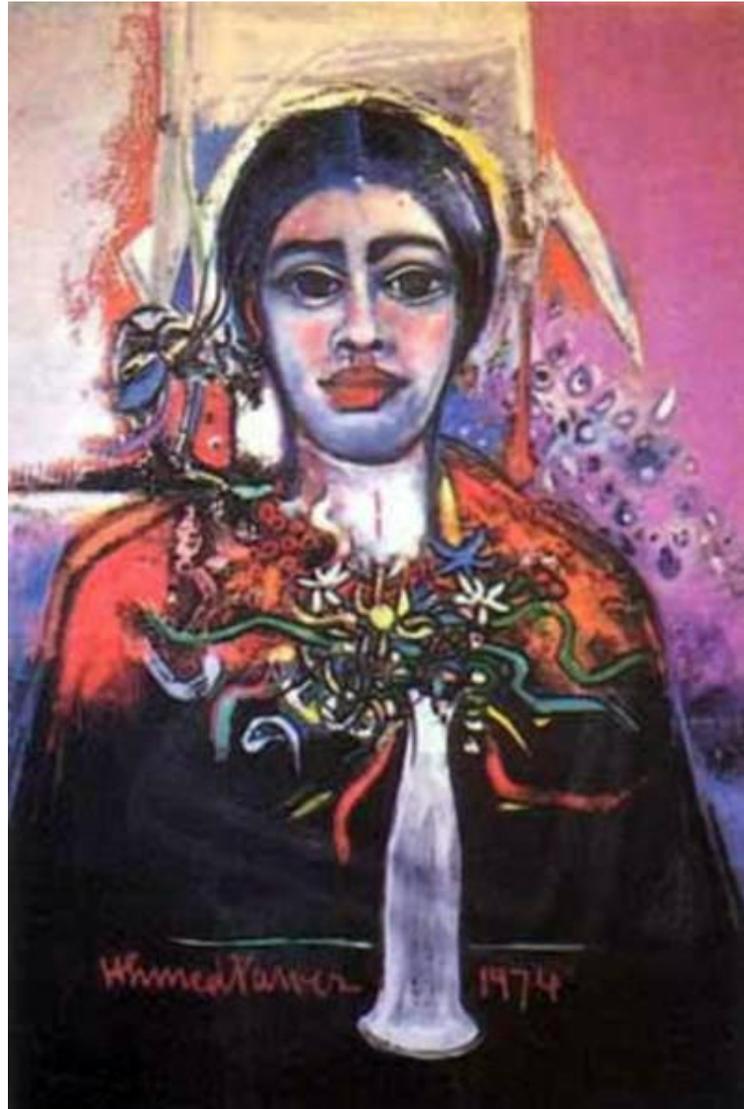
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Moyene Najmi (1926-1997)

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- Moyene Najmi born in (1928) was a painter who participated immensely in shaping, perhaps the first art movement of Pakistan, what is now described as 'Lahore Art Circle'. Besides being a painter he was more popular for his occupation of teaching at one of Lahore's well known institute Atchison College. It seems that his life started as an ambitious artist who participated in exhibitions held by Shimla's Fine arts society (a center of elite art aficionada during 1930's) along with Amrita Sher Gill and Jamini Roy but as soon as his professional life expedited he got involved in freelance commercial work, working on press layouts, cinema slides and advertisements of various sort. Resources say he came from a well-off family. What was his quest? Surely it had been more than just earning a livelihood! It could probably be because of his interest in design or exposure to design work that have had added all that abstraction he explored later under Shakir Ali's patronage!
- Moyene Najmi studied painting with well-known Russian Landscape artist S. Roerich at Sulalha Simla Hills, 1946-47, and was for many years organized art classes at the Punjab Arts Council. His early work was based on capturing landscapes and street scenes in naturalistic way but later he turned towards abstraction related to cubism. His painting Mughal Garden is related to his latest style in which landscape and architectural features are used to create the cubist effect. Moyene combined architectural structures with elements of landscape using angular divisions and geometrical shapes by extracting certain elements from particular scenes and rearranging them with other objects. But these elements are difficult to recognize and in this way Moyene's work categorized in modern painters.

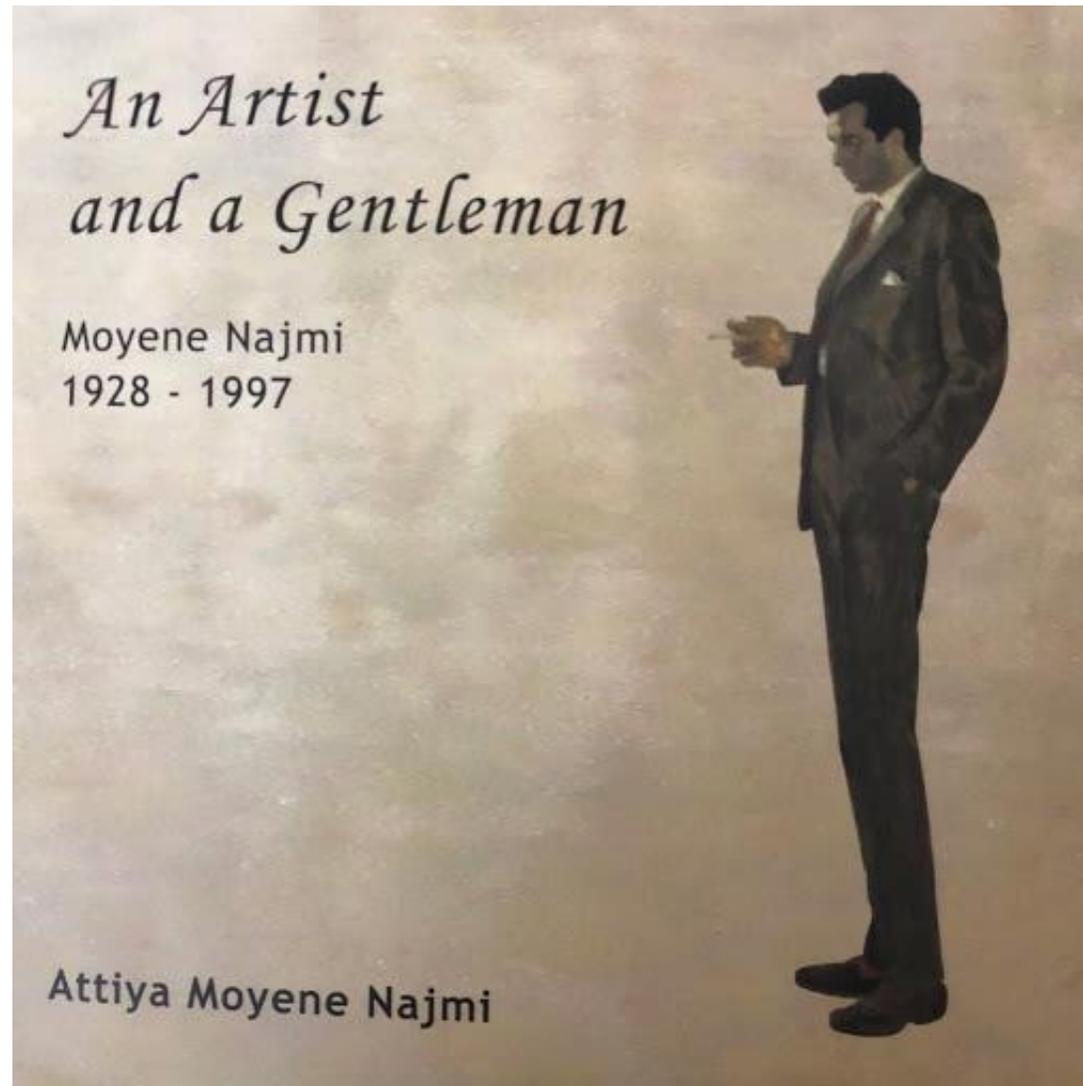
Moyene Najmi (1926-1997)

- His initial work is work of a painter who is impressed by brush work and finding a lot of inspiration in nature painting landscapes and city views...but as we look through his later work one comes across with mindset of a modernist. Najmi started looking at the similar subject matter with a different eye. He makes us see many ways of looking at the metropolis of Lahore.
- In the words of Attiya Moyene Najmi: *“Najmi, at an earlier phase of Pakistani art sought to explore the link between past and present, between tradition and modernity, between vernacular and imported. So in these works, one traces images of Mughal buildings, garden, historic structures of Lahore, transformed in shapes and forms that remind of abstract art’s sensibility, and Cubism”*.
- Moyene Najmi was good friends with Ali Imam, one of the close companion of Shakir Ali. Imam’s company brought a lot of kinship in his work though Imam did induce figures too! However as Najmi grouped up with other like-minded people in 50’s he induced another aspect to his imagery and that was the use of abstraction. An artist who initially speaking a simple language through plein air landscapes, gradually converted to a modern diction using rural Punjab and Shalimar garden as one of his subjects. His subject remained the same yet his method of painting changed.
- The presence of Muslim architectural features and ornamental elements in his work do confirm his inclination towards Muslim cultural and artistic values of the sub-continent

Moyene Najmi (1926-1997)

- The modern appearance of his visuals which are built with the local vocabulary include inner city buildings, Jharokas and multifoil arches. Then what is that makes his imagery modern? It is definitely not the vocabulary nor the color palette but the way all the elements are put together and rendered on a two dimensional surface. Careful study of abstracted phenomena have helped Najmi to achieve a more meaningful result when he decides to do it with all his intentions. Cubists had a mission which was to eliminate the third dimension. Najmi in *Shalimar Gardens* seems to be experimented with that too by using a viewpoint giving the whole a sense of space which is customary of traditional miniature painting. Najmi tries to synchronize with the modern spirit of his time by juxtaposing the two different tangents. The traditional objects expressed in an abstract manner: using bright colors on a canvas charged with brush strokes! Traditional elements though are used with some sense of taste and a much of grace. Using recognizable subject matter and painting it in a non-representational way was almost every other modernist's quest of his times (said Amina Cheema).
- Najmi seems to be aspiring younger lot during his teaching career first at Murree and then in Lahore at an eminent place the Aitchison College. The painter's "*contribution to art scene in Pakistan can be measured in the obvious pleasure he derived from teaching art and inspiring young art students, as well as encouraging and promoting other artists through his work in the art councils, and in his own art gallery*", which was part of his residence in Lawrence Road, Lahore (said Attiya Moyene Najmi).

Cover page of the book written by his wife



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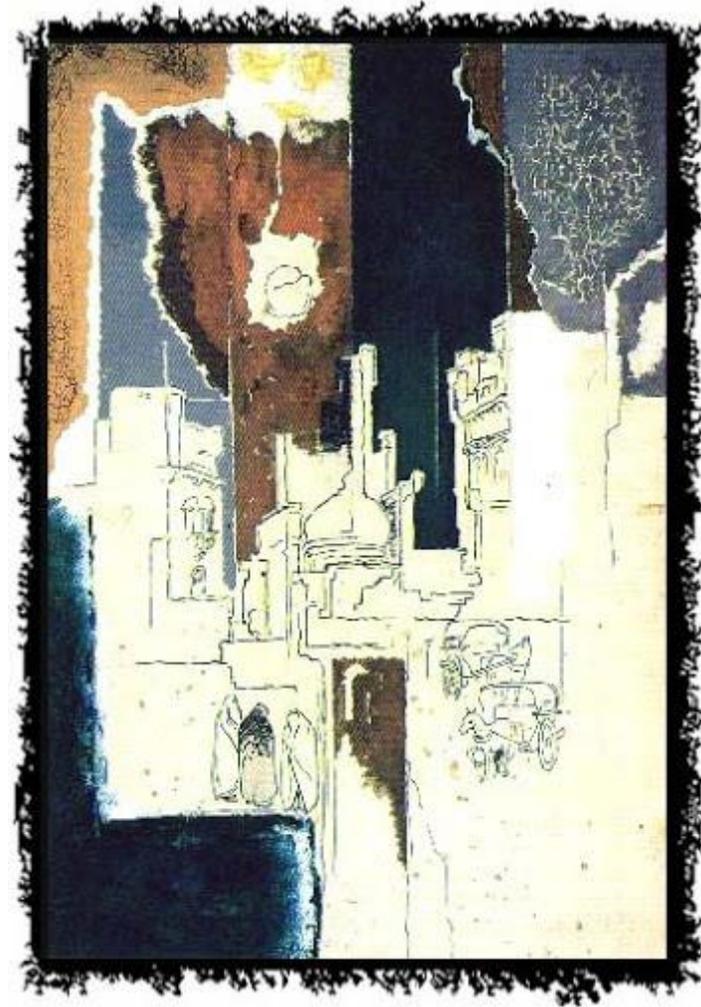
Shalimar Garden



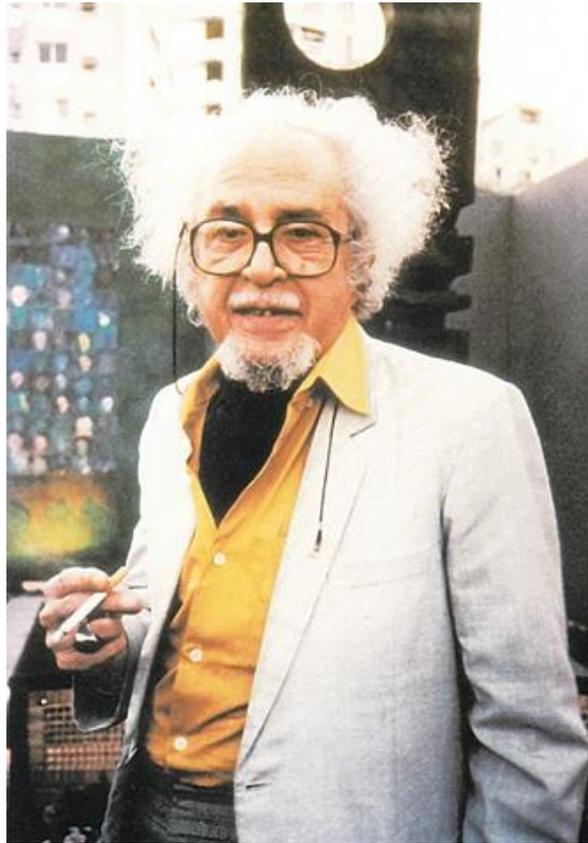
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Ali Imam (1924-2002)



Ali Imam (1924-2002)

- Ali Imam was born in Narsinghpur, Madhya Pradesh in 1924. In the early 1940s, for education in Arts, he went to the Nagpur School of Art. Then he studied for 2 years at the Bombay-based “J. J. School of Art” then he went on to complete his intermediate from Allahabad in 1946. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, Ali Imam and some of Ali Imam’s family migrated to Pakistan. Painting in his spare time continued whilst studying at Gordon College, Rawalpindi.
- He graduated from the Punjab University in 1949. He got involved with the Progressive Writers Movement and then the Communist Party as a full time worker. Eventually resigning from active politics in ’52 Imam took charge of the art departments at Lawrence College, Ghora Gali, Murree and later Sadiq Public School, Bahawalpur, where he taught painting and art history. Sensitive to the surrounding beauty and old city architecture his early art centered on street scenes and landscapes of Murree and Bahawalpur.
- During those years as founder member of The Lahore Art Circle, he and his likeminded fellow artists Marium Shah, Razzia Feroze, Moyenne Najmi, A.J. Shemza, Ahmed Parvez and Sheikh Safdar held exhibitions in Lahore, Murree and Karachi. Possessing an inquiring mind soon his hunger for advanced knowledge and the learning experience of exposure to the galleries, museums and cultural life specific to art capitals prompted him to go to abroad.

Ali Imam (1924-2002)

- So he decided to move to London and lived there for almost eleven years. In London, he studied art at Saint Martins School of Art from 1959–1960 and later at Hammersmith College of Art from 1962–1963. The London Group evolved when Ahmed Parvez, Shemza, Murtaza Bashir and Safiuddin Ahmed joined him to exhibit together at the Woodstock Gallery, London.
- Marjorie Husain in her monograph on Ali Imam reveals that on seeing the exhibition art critic G.M. Butcher was quick to notice *“tendencies towards the future of painting, not only in Pakistan, but throughout the newly emerging countries of Islam from Morocco to Indonesia.”* Of Imam’s later work Butcher remarked, *“He has made creditable progress in learning what it means to be a painter. This in spite of the fact that he is essentially an intellectual”*.
- Upon returning from London, Imam founded the Indus Gallery in Karachi in 1971, still one of the major art galleries in Pakistan as of 2010. He took the name “Indus Gallery” from the Indus River in ancient India, now in Pakistan. He set up the Indus Gallery to play a key role for art and artists of Pakistan. He once said in an interview, *“I decided to come back to Pakistan and be helpful to those who are more gifted and more talented than me, and to create a climate of work where I could be a sort of guidance and help”*.
- He joined CIAC (Central Institute of Art & Craft) as the head of the chair. In his brief tenure, 1967-1970, the student body swelled from a few students to 150. The best and the brightest from that lot are today excelling as artists, designers, art directors, critics and writers. Some of the leading lights include Nahid Raza, Noorjehan Bilgrami, Tabinda Chinoy, Niilofer Farrukh, Rumana Hussain, Shakeel Siddiqi, Shakeel Ismail, Mansur Salim, Seema Tahir Khan and Imran Mir, etc.

Ali Imam (1924-2002)

- His wife, Shahnaz, recalled that the Indus Gallery had become a hub of cultural activity in Karachi back in the 1970s. Some of the noted painter artists that participated in Indus Gallery exhibits were Sadequain and Ismail Gulgee among many others. Poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, scientist Salimuzzaman Siddiqui, and artists, Ahmed Parvez, Sadequain, Tassadaq Sohail, M.F. Hussain, Francis Newton Souza, were just a few of the many luminaries who were part of the gallery meetings and sittings.
- An art connoisseur and prominent media personality writes in his personal memoir (published in the Pakistan Art Review) that the gallery was “*the unsung capital of the Karachi art scene for the last quarter of a century*”. He remembers Ali Imam as “*a Merlin who had no reservations about imparting his skill and knowledge to those of us who buzzed around him like infected mosquitoes from the swamps of martial culture spread outside.*”
- Artist Nahid Raza said on Imam’s death. “*With him went an entire century. He had a complete understanding of the grammar of painting. He also knew how to initiate a person into the fascinating world of art.*”

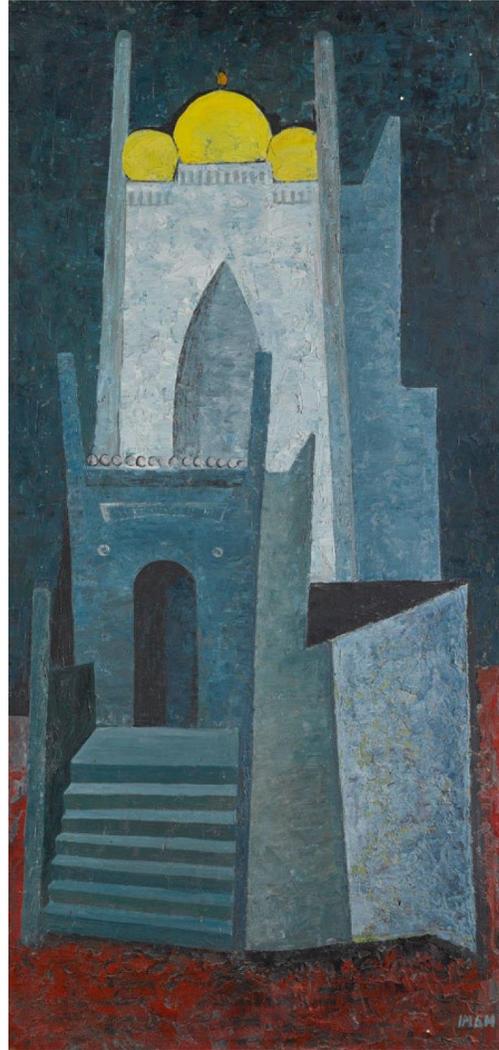
Murree Hills (1953)



Farmers



Cityscape



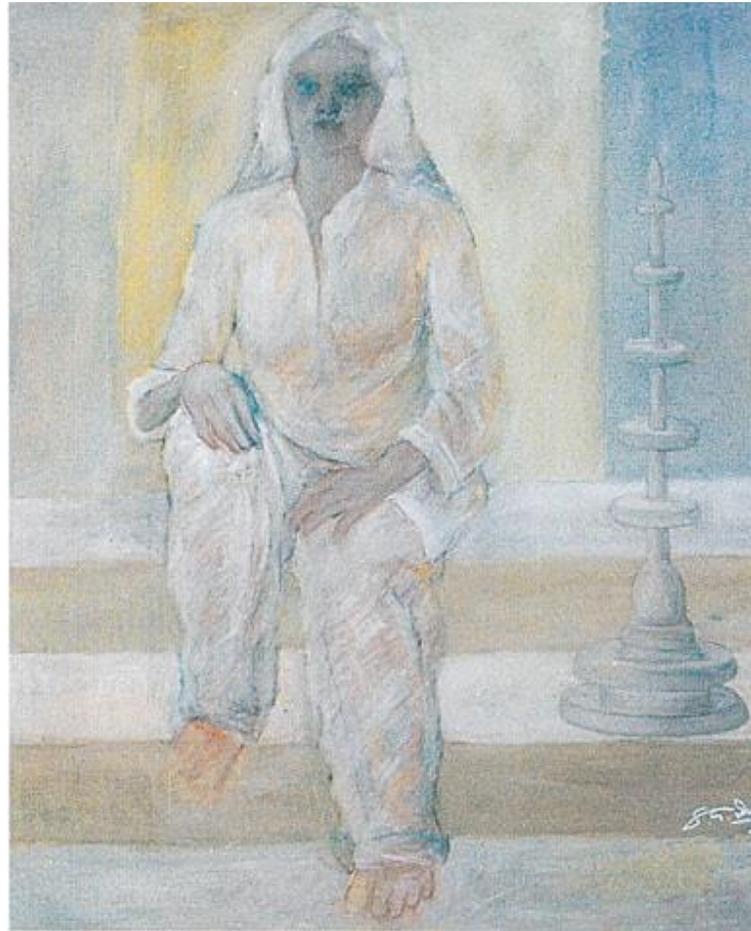
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White on white (2000)



Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983)

Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983)

- Sheikh Safdar, was one of the most important avant-garde artist and a founding member of Lahore Art Circle. Like other members of the group his visual and stylistic conventions engaged modernist abstract vocabulary of the 20th Century. References of Abstraction, Cubism and Post-Impressionism formed his visual vocabulary but was grounded within the locality of Indian Sub-Continent.
- Sheikh Safdar was born in Gujrat in 1924 to a middle-class family. Since childhood he was exceptionally talented and had great interest in art and drawing. He learnt drawing after making reproductions of posters his brother owned. He was a self-taught artist.
- At the age of 16 after his fathers death, he moved to Bombay to make a living and to learn art. There he met a Karachi based artist who was working as set designer for films. On the bases of Safdar's skills in art, he became a member of the set designing team. Occasionally, he took art classes at J.J School of Art.
- In the words of Samina Ibqal: "From 1944-1946, he got commission to design decorations for All India Industrial Exhibition in Karachi. During the same period he along with other commercial artists joined *The Muslim Art Sketch Club*. At this time, he established himself as a successful commercial artist. He travelled throughout India, saw all the historical references ranges from Ajanta, Allora, Elephanta and traditional Indian Paintings of Mughal, Pahari Schools".

Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983)

- Among western artists, he appreciated works by Vincent Van Gogh, Matisse and Salvador Dali, he accessed them through mass media Journal in his childhood.
- After partition, he got settled in Lahore to join his family. Then again he moved to Karachi to work in the film industry again. It was a hard time after partition, Lahore was the hub of art activities those day, so analyzing this perspective he came back to Lahore in search of opportunities. Pak Tea House, located at the Mall was the meeting place for intellectuals. Skeikh Safdar also joined the meetings of artists who were in search of a new direction in art and thus became a member of Lahore Art Circle.
- According to Akbar Naqvi, scholar of history of art: *“The Art Circle came into being because these artists wanted freedom to breathe and to do things beyond the range of Anna Molka, Chughtai, and Allah Baksh, the three icon of Lahore’s art establishment. They wanted to go modern whether anyone liked it or not”*.
- Safdar’s earlier landscape paintings from late 1940’s are a mix of naturalist and abstract renderings. His picturesque landscapes appear to be mimetic in their use of color, but abstraction is evident in its various forms. His thick application of impasto oil paint on masonite testifies to his early childhood exposure to Vincent Van Gogh paintings.

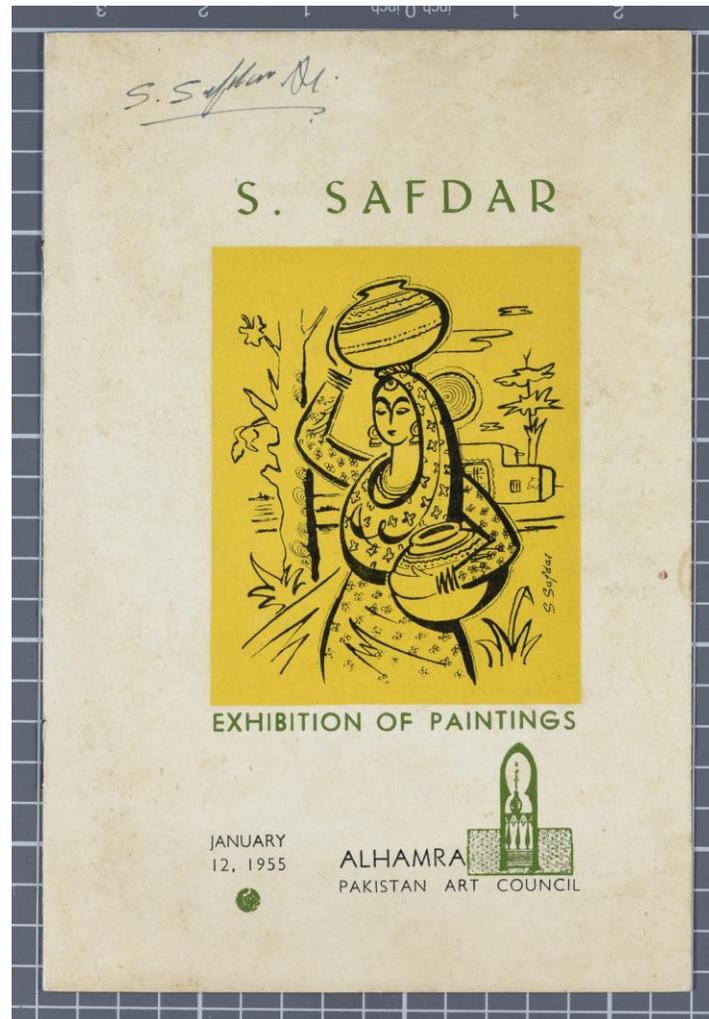
Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983)

- He also used still life as a subject to represent through his style. In Safdar's Still life painting, the picture plane is divided and subdivided in several different planes and spaces by geometric shapes with black outline. Safdar experiments with cubist sensibilities in which the still life does not show one perspective, but presents the objects from multiple perspectives.
- Safdar's restless artistic nature compelled him towards continuous experimentation in his work. His engagement and experience in commercial arts and acquisition of designing sensibilities played a vital role in his painterly endeavors that was continuously evolving through his rigorous experimentation with color, form, and texture. Safdar's experimentation with cubist approaches in his still life paintings further developed into introducing figure and grid into his work. The two motifs became interwoven, and his use of the grid became his signature style for the rest of his artistic career. His use of simple circular, oval, rectangular, and square shapes create a pattern, which is further divided into sub-shapes, thereby making the grid more complicated.
- One of the most recognizable characteristics of Safdar's work is his merger of grid, landscape, and figure into a unified composition.
- His use of black outline and the denial of perspective can be traced back to the tradition of Ajanta Cave paintings and of Indian Miniature painting. His use of grid to merge figure, landscape and still life together is his modernist innovation.

Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983)

- Sheikh Safdar was an intermediary figure, largely seen as a graphic designer of an advertising company, yet his serious engagement with modern art is an important contribution to the art history of Pakistan. His commitment to art is evident from his continuous experimentation, in the quest to find his own distinct style that persisted throughout his life.

Invitation card of his exhibition



Landscape (1950's)



Still Life (1950's)



Untitled (1957)



Untitled (1950's)



Mother and Child (1954)



Untitled (1960's)



Untitled (1960's)

