



Sumaya Durrani, Barefoot 1996. Mixed media on paper 43.18 X 63.5cm

Works In Progress

Salima Hashmi 1991

It is more than five years since Sumaya Durrani first showed her work professionally in Pakistan. This latest series of works on paper is a strong reminder that she is one of the most uncompromising and lucid of Pakistan's contemporary painters. The major part of Sumaya's formal visual arts training was in the US, and it was an unmistakable factor in her painting. The exploration of process and materials, the structural analysis, the emotive gesture all evoked the discipline she had moved through. That she was a painter of intelligence and commitment was quite apparent, yet one wondered if coming home would dismember, infiltrate and saturate. Five years later, one sees that it has happened - the crucial transition from energetic structural explorer to the passionate investigator. When the medium turns inward, the painter finds within herself the touchstone, to provide the connection between herself and the reality she lives in. Through turning inward, she in fact opens up to the world giving the work conviction. The contemplative yet urgent images are not academic symbolic manifestations of concepts but are a statement of the 'how' and where' and the 'when' of her existence. They have been wrested painfully from experience and so carry the kernel of truth.

One is tempted to make the most obvious comparisons between these and her earlier paintings but is stopped dead in one's tracks perhaps because we are witnessing a rare and welcome event, the growth and development of a thoughtful artist. It is enough to encounter these

powerful yet delicately searching works which speak of the contradictions of our times, the darkness of all our realities and the celebration of life.

Sumaya's affinity for a speaking surface and her dexterity with marks is no longer just a part of the painter's repertoire; now it is the struggle to construct a visual vocabulary and a language which is intent on being personal, coherent, and poignant. It is a 'coming home' in more ways than one.



Salima Hashmi¹

Salima Hashmi is an artist (b. 1942, Delhi), curator and contemporary art historian. She was founding Dean at the Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore in 2003 where she is now Professor Emeritus. She taught at the National College of Arts, Lahore, for 30 years. She was also the Principal of the College for 4 years, and held the post of Professor of Fine Arts. She is a painter of repute whose works have been exhibited in Pakistan and in international exhibitions. She has written extensively on the arts, and has curated exhibitions of contemporary art and traditional textile, within Pakistan and internationally. Salima Hashmi was the co-founder of the Rohtas Gallery in Islamabad, established in 1981, and established Rohtas-2 in Lahore in 2001, which has focused on young artists and new art practices. Her book “Unveiling the Visible - Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan” was published in 2002, and ‘Memories, Myths, Mutations – Contemporary Art of India and Pakistan’ co-authored with Yashodhara Dalmia for Oxford University Press, India in 2006. She has edited ‘The Eye Still Seeks – Contemporary Art of Pakistan for Penguin Books, India in 2014. “Nazar Ki Umang” edited Urdu translation of ‘The Eye Still Seeks’ for Sang-e-Meel, Pakistan in 2020. Salima Hashmi curated “Hanging Fire” an exhibition of Pakistani Contemporary Art for Asia Society Museum, New York in 2009, which was accompanied by an extensive catalogue. She curated the critically acclaimed exhibition titled ‘This Night-Bitten Dawn’ hosted by Gujral Foundation and the Devi Art Foundation in Delhi, which opened on the occasion of the Delhi Art Fair, 2016. The government of Pakistan awarded her the President's Medal for Pride of Performance for Art Education in 1999. The Australian Council of Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) nominated her as Inaugural International Fellow, for distinguished service to art and design education in 2011. She was awarded the Alma Award by Alma Culture Center, Oslo, Norway for promotion of tolerance through performance in 2016. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Bath Spa University, UK in 2016. Professor Hashmi was made Professor Emeritus, School of Visual Art and Design, Beaconhouse National University in 2017. She is Council member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

¹ Photo Source: Dawn News – From art to activism, the versatile Salima Hashmi has done it all