



Sumaya Durrani, Barefoot 1995, Mixed Media on paper, 43.18 X 63.5 cm

Enchanting Works

Dr. Muhammad Ali Siddiqui 2003

Sumaya Durrani belongs to the short list of painters who do not believe in bending their predilections to the conveniences of easy compromises on matters of the form and content. She believes in herself and in doing so she is prepared to pay the cost of being very much herself.

A Bachelor and Master of Fine Art, with distinction, Cum Laude, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA, she took to teaching at NCA, Bilkent University-Ankara, Indus Valley School and worked as Principal of Pakistan Gem and Jewelry Institute Karachi. She is an artist who believes in instilling a sense of mission in her students' minds. She believes that art teaching in Pakistan had a dual function to perform - converting young minds to the need for counting art as a soul-searching activity and developing in them a will to live by it. She thinks that in a society where art is suspect there ought to be a missionary zeal to establish the value of aesthetics. Hence an art teacher should try to lead by example as far as possible.

Granddaughter of Shams-ul-Ulema Allama Tajwar Najeebabadi, who devoted his life time to the teaching of Urdu literature in Lahore's Dyal Singh College, she carries the same flair and spirit which characterized her grandfather.

Sumaya's retrospective at Chawkandi - to be mounted in the first week of May'03 - has taken ten years to crystallize. Her complex mind opens new doors of perceptions for the spectator. Her penchant for nominalism has grown stronger and there is hardly any doubt that she has acquired a rare knack of saying it all in the most economical way. The pictorial space that holds her expansive statements is usually terse. It is this terseness coupled with the desire to express her point of view which has made her an artist to be closely watched. With her sombre colours that bring forth a sensuousness, she enters our consciousness steadily though stealthily.

I had the occasion of viewing more than a hundred works by her. Her work articulates and celebrates her 'silence'. She manipulates line and color and makes it subservient to her theme with a remarkable intensity that first cajoles and then lures one into a feeling that meanders into areas which at times border on cynicism.

The first phase of Sumaya's retrospective could be termed as a mega event in the city's art world. This is, perhaps an existentialist concern to treat existence above essence. Life is nothing but a vacant space - waiting to crown her with some meaning, some sense of fulfilment. Perhaps it is one way of taking existence as a means to achieve spiritual fulfilment.

Another phase depicts the quest for spiritual peace - meditating beneath the trees and praying for self-fulfilment. This section too is meaningful if the Gestalt concept of the truth was given due consideration.

The subsequent phase brings one to the fulfilment of the voyage, interspersed with strong suggestions of power denoted by the vibrant Tiger.

The next phase is a celebration of spiritual enlightenment. A beautiful woman sitting on an imaginary proverbial boat amidst the motifs picked up from an arcadia - all of them soothing

and rewarding. The artist reminds one of D. H. Lawrence whose prizing of sex as an attribute of spiritual quest has had repercussions far and wide.

The last section of works is the 'Kaaba' series. The innovative compositions of the Kaaba vouchsafe for the brilliance of execution. Sumaya Durrani uses color to highlight the spiritual evocation a devotee gets from the Kaaba proves that her visuals depict architectural definitiveness.

A very important aspect of Sumaya's work is that while subscribing to the feminist plea for understanding the 'Female' contribution in all forms of creativity, she does not exploit the female figure. Her empathies with her gender are very pronounced. Yet she is not a chauvinist amongst feminists. She strikes a golden mean which points to the need for a more rational outlook and that is what Sumaya Durrani stands for -

Primacy of viewpoint and a strong aesthetic sensibility.



Dr. Muhammad Ali Siddiqui (1938-2013) was a distinguished scholar, an academic, a literary critic and newspaper columnist. He was widely known by his pen name Ariel. Born on March 7th in Amroha British India, Dr. Siddiqui migrated to Pakistan with his family in 1948. He received his early education at the Christian Mission School in Karachi. He then went on to receive his Masters in English Literature from the University of Karachi in 1962. He was proficient in English, French, Hindko, Hindi, Persian, Punjabi, Sindhi, Seraiki, and Urdu. Dr. Siddiqui received his PhD in 1992 and his D.Litt. in 2003 at the University of Karachi. He was Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences at the Institute of Business and Technology and Dean of Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at Hamdard University. He was a member of several national and international organizations, including the Pakistan Writers Guild, International Association of Literary Critics, (AILC), Stavanger, Norway Association Des Litteraire Critiques International, Paris, European Union of Writers and Scientists, Rome, and Majlis-i-Farough-i-Urdu Adab, Doha, Qatar. Dr. Muhammad Ali Siddiqui published over 100 research articles and 16 books, two of which were recognized as the Best Books of the Year in 1976 and 1979. He contributed to publications such as Business Recorder and Dawn newspaper, using his pen name Ariel. He lectured at numerous universities including London University, Carlton University, and Oslo University. Dr. Muhammad Ali Siddiqui served as the Director of Quaid e Azam University for six years and was the President of Progressive Writers Association in 2013 at the time of his death. He received the Pride of Performance in 2003.

Bibliography

Siddiqui, Muhammad. "Enchanting Works." *Sumaya Durrani Monograph*. Karachi: Benazir 241- C Block 2 P.E.C.H.S, 2003: 55-59.