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Adeel uz Zafar

Salwat Ali is a leading art critic. As founder member and Associate Writer of the Fine arts Society, she commenced formal writing on art for local publications in the early nineties. Her articles, reviews, essays, and reports are published on a weekly and monthly basis in the Pakistan's leading news papers like Dawn, 'The News' and 'Artline' and the special art pages of the magazine 'News Line'. Unknown to many, Salwat Ali has had formal training as a visual artist.

Ali, Salwat. "Contemporary Drawing", Artmart, DAWN [Pakistan], p.11, 16 August, 2009

Employing the scratch method to build his trajectory of mark making, Adeel Zafar literally worked from the inside out on a thick vinyl base which lends itself well to grazing, scraping and scoring lines. His drawing support, the reverse side of full scale vinyl sheets, were roller painted pitch black on which his image was etched out line by grey line. Previously given to collating smaller elements to assemble the big picture, Zafar reversing his process in this instance had magnified a tiny toy image into an extra large scale.

His subject, an innocuous stuffed toy donkey (peculiarly similar to the very sprightly and talkative 'Donkey' character in the animation movie Shrek) wrapped completely in gauze bandage, challenged viewer perceptions on a technical and theoretical level. Zafar used sharp edged, improvised carpenter tools with remarkable dexterity and sensitivity to create the wavering linear patterns of fine gauze mesh. The process calls for a fair amount of control and concentration because when etching on a surface for tonal effects, mistakes can seldom be erased. Conceptually, the toy form and bandage wrap suggested several readings of a social and political nature ranging from censorship to camouflage, from child play to power politics and from freedom to manipulation. The faint roaring tiger profile concealed in the posterior form was a covert articulation of menace.

A 1998 NCA graduate, Zafar's main line of work as a children's book illustrator has not only given him the edge to invert toy imagery with considerable aplomb but also to create nuanced linearity.

Ali, Salwat. "Reviving the Old Bond", Artist's work, DAWN [Pakistan], p.8, 27 February, 2011

Novel technique and unusual choice of subject are propelling young entrant Adeel uz Zafar to the forefront. Capitalising on the immediate impact of opposites, massive artworks versus intricate workmanship his scratch technique of scoring lines/marks by grazing the large canvas/vinyl support with sharp instruments is unusual and inventive. Bandaged in gauze and purporting sinister expressions his outsize animal images are inversions of innocuous stuffed toys. In the Koel show, the massive, engraved drawing on vinyl, 'Kong—the tragic anti hero', portrays a menacing gorilla swathed in bandages—robbed of his thunder he is a sorry sight of a frustrated animal.

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Quddus Mirza is an artist, an art teacher and independent curator .Having trained as a visual artist from National College of Arts, Lahore and the Royal College of Art, London, Mirza is also an art critic writes regular weekly column appearing In Pakistan's major news paper, 'The News International'. He is a regular contributor to other leading news publications like; The Dawn, Libas, Contemporary, Flash Art and Art India. He is co-author of the book "50 years in Pakistan" and has written essays on Pakistani art in different international art catalogues.

Mirza, Quddus. "Seize the Size", Encore, The News [Pakistan], p.32, 16 August, 2009

Surprisingly, the work of other two artists seems more interesting and resolved. Adeel has enlarged a tiny toy, donkey wrapped in bandage, on a huge dark vinyl surface. By carefully scratching white lines on the black coated layer, contours of toy are drawn in a realistic manner. Absurdly, its monumental scale and placement on a floating tone of grey alludes to our socio-political situation, where a useless motif or position is often blown to such great heights that it becomes a familiar object.

Shahana Rajani is an art critic who graduated from Cambridge University and works as a curator for Karachi School of Arts. She is teaching Art History at visual Arts Department, Karachi University. She contributes regularly to publications such as Nukta Art & Herald Pakistan.

Rajani, Shahana. "Thinking Big", Nukta Art [Pakistan], Vol 4, p.40, October, 2009

The main space of the gallery displays four works which are spaced out from each other so that the viewer is allowed to engage with each on its own terms. The simplest yet most effective work is by far Adeel uz Zafar's engraved diptych *The Lion at Rest*. While the other artists seem to digress from the central theme of scale, Adeel makes most of the opportunity by depicting a donkey-shaped toy wrapped in gauze on a colossal scale. The two life-size sketches of the toy displayed in the adjoining room allow the viewer to compare the vast differences in impact due to variations in scale hence justifying the statement 'Size Does Matter'. The artist explains that on a more subconscious level the piece also works as a social commentary, symbolising people who wrap themselves up in many layers to hide their real circumstances. However the gauze wrappings seem to conceal emptiness rather than real matter, playing with the idea of identity and disenfranchisement and underscoring our fear that beneath our many superficial layers, there is no genuine substance inside.

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*The well-known art critic **Marjorie Husain** has been a prominent figure in Pakistan's art circles for over two decades. Promoting local art and culture both in the country and abroad, she has arranged art exhibitions of Pakistani artists of foreign countries, written a history of arts in the subcontinent for the Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, USA, and given numerous lectures here and in western countries. She is a regular contributor to the Dawn Review and She magazine. The author has also contributed a chapter on Fifty Years of Art in Pakistan in Karachi: Megacity of Our Times, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1997.*

Hussain, Marjorie. "What does it mean to be a man in modern society", exhibition brochure, p.2, Art Chowk-The Gallery, Karachi, 2009

Adeel uz Zafar took his art training from the National College of Arts, Lahore, graduating in 1998. He returned to Karachi where he began his teaching career at the Karachi School of Art, and made considerable success as an illustrator for children's books. Now teaching at the Karachi Grammar School and Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVSAA), Zafar is currently engaged in exploring the possibilities of diverse media. His work in exhibition is extraordinary: the media is comprised of plastic vinyl cloth stretched on large scale board surfaces that are covered with transparent acrylic gel. Squaring the surface with grids made of thread, the artist uses sharp tools in a scraperboard action to engrave a complex pattern creating a linear perspective so fine that images appear densely detailed.

Zafar takes as his 'model' his child's teddy bear, a symbol of transient interest, an object loved for a while and then discarded. In his mural scaled work, the form of the toy appears covered in bandages, minutely textured so that every thread of yarn is distinguished. Sharing the composition is the very realistic and sensitively rendered face of a gorilla, the eyes incongruously showing deep pools of empathy. Zafar's subject probes the common culture and asks uncomfortable questions about identity, using large spaced surfaces with confidence and skill.

***Saira Ansari** is a drawing and text artist. Having trained from National College of Arts, Lahore, Sara also writes for different publication in Pakistan and Abroad. She has recently been selected for a special project at the India Art Summit 2011. You can find her musings at *The s.a. Project* blog (www.thesaproject.wordpress.com).*

Ansari, Saira. "Something Old, Something New", The Herald [Pakistan], p.101, May, 2010

The large body of work on display encompassed significantly different genres of art-making. Displayed on two juxtaposed walls of the main chamber of the gallery were the works of the veteran artist Afroz and the younger Zafar, who has graduated from the National College of Arts (NCA) in 1998. The difference in the treatment of their works both technically and conceptually set the tone of the show- a kind of dialogue between youthfulness and maturity. Afroz's delicately handled musings (Aseer Series), soft graphite drawing on the paper, looked in the silent reverie at the playful, chatter of Zafar's bandaged animals, scratched fastidiously on to large vinyl surfaces and also printed on canvas. Both the art works presented a deep and masterful understanding of line and drawing.

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*A painter and home maker, **Samia Azhar** uses writing as a tool to clarify her thoughts. Having trained from National College of Arts Lahore, Samia also teaches MA Visual Arts at the same place.*

Azhar, Samia. "Time for Action", Nigaah [Pakistan], Vol. 1 Six, p. 22-29, 2010

Zafar ascribes his use of gold leaf from a derivative interest in miniature painting. The Residency provided an opportunity to learn the technique from miniaturist Mudassar Manzoor. Jagath Ravindra also ascribes a return to the use of acrylic gold as inspired by his stay at the Residency. Zafar has manipulated the technique to suit his own purposes, growing gold horns on the silhouetted images of 2 stuffed toys. The making of a blurred image is attributed to colleague and fellow resident Naseer Bhurgari. Zafar is also experimenting with a change of surface and medium, vinyl having been his surface of choice for many years. Zafar's technique is worthy of description, as it is original. An illustrator for numerous publishing houses, Adeel detoured into the "fine" arts when a project put him into isolation amongst Pakistan's wondrous Northern Areas. It was here that he was inspired to merge the experiences of illustrating children's texts with his own thoughts. The availability of exposed film (this was prior to the advent of the digital camera) and instruments that could scratch, as the only medium/ surface/ tool available, became the basis for Zafar's future work. The three "canvases" completed at the end of the Residency continue to evolve in the manner of their predecessors, with minor developments which become intrinsic as the work develops. Zafar's sizes vary from small 1'x 1', to a larger than life 8'x8'.

The smaller works are processed in the additive way, grey surfaces with black silhouetted stuffed animals, white bandages unraveling themselves. One has startling gold antlers emerging from its head. The gigantic black canvas is processed in the subtractive manner, the vinyl having been painstakingly scratched out to produce lines forming an image of a fully bandaged, almost mummified, cuddly dog, whose proportions are proportional to the size of its surface- huge! Zafar's images inspire reflection. They are symbolic, and their meanings can be read at many levels: personal, social, political and philosophical. This is, in fact, true of most of the art work produced during the RM Residency.

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Nafisa Rizvi is a writer, art critic, independent curator. With a Bachelor's in English and a Postgraduate Diploma in Advertising and Marketing from UCLA, Nafisa worked for many years in advertising before deciding to shed the corporate skin and turn to 'authentic, meaningful labours of love' as she calls it. She published her first novel The Blue Room in 2008 and has been writing on art in various magazines and newspapers for many years. Her articles are featured regularly in Herald, Pakistan's monthly news magazine. Nafisa is also a member of the editorial board of Third Text Asia, a scholarly journal that offers critical perspectives on contemporary art and culture.

Rizvi, Nafisa. "The Show "Size Does Matter – is not so much about scale as much as another essential element of art practice – Drawing", exhibition catalogue, p.7, Size Does Matter, VM Gallery, Karachi

There is an interesting event taking place in this show. If justice is ever meted out in the world of art, which is unlikely, Naseer Bhurgri and Adeel Zafar will be named pioneers of the true "Nau-Miniaturism" movement in Pakistan. We have witnessed the existential agonizing over the birth pangs of the modified miniature that has been touted as by far the most radical and ground-breaking initiative to be started and then instituted in Pakistan simply because it has broken the hermetic seal of the age-old genre. But the modern miniature until now has been little more than a return to the antiquated form with all its trappings of ornamentation, insistence on purity of form and line, courtly decadence, romantic notions of idealism and the pursuit of non-illusionistic flatness to mirror the requisite elements of the illustrated manuscript for which the traditional genre was created. In all of this, the school of modern miniature has only transposed the subject matter by addressing more modern concerns of socio-political dilemmas or dogmatic religious practice.

What Zafar and Bhurgri have acquired is a far more lasting, well-nurtured position on the miniaturist technique. In their work, compression and diminution are replaced by monumental scale in keeping with the excesses and exuberances of the world today. But what they have preserved of the tradition is the detailed rendering that assists the artist in creating textural diversity and translucence and the ability to provoke the mind's powers of perception. The fine line produced by the single squirrel hair paintbrush has immense possibilities, although the required effect is not restricted to the use of that precise brush -- Adeel Zafar uses a scraping or scratching device and Bhurgri uses a pencil. It is left to posterity to ascertain the measure of influence that these artists will wield but for now we may relish their inventiveness.

Rizvi, Nafisa. "I like to challenge myself", The News - Profile [Pakistan], p.32, 26 June 2011

For more than eight years after he graduated from NCA, Adeel-uz-Zafar did not engage in studio practice. At the rate with which the art world sprints ahead today, an absence of that duration would indubitably constitute an early professional death. But Zafar took it in his stride. "For many years, I was illustrating children's book and it paid my bills but I wasn't unhappy doing it. I was commissioned to live and work in Gilgit for a while and it was a great experience because I coalesced with nature and found time to discover myself.

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Back in Karachi, I also worked in a postproduction unit and learned new, state-of-the-art software. I can't say any of that time was wasted. I may not have been making art but I was learning and growing and evolving as a person and as an artist."

Sure enough in 2009, Zafar made an astounding comeback and substantially gained lost time. Today he is recognised as a leading artist in Pakistan and was included in the roster of 44 artists making cutting-edge art in the seminal show 'The Rising Tide' at Mohatta Palace in 2010.

"I like to challenge myself," says Zafar, a truism we hear from most artists. But Zafar takes this obvious platitude to extremes assuming the mantle of "a masochist for the sake of my art" as he puts it. For his thesis Zafar installed more than a thousand MDF board tiles, 6 by 6 inches each and painted the image of an eye on all of them. "I wanted to see if I had the patience and endurance to complete this tedious test I had set for myself." Of course the project had conceptual ligaments of vision, both human and cosmic, that bound the piece to an ongoing dialogue about insight and awareness. But through this experiment Zafar learned that he had the mettle he needed to go the extra mile in his art.

"During my sojourn in Gilgit, there were no art shops from where I could buy suitable paper or art materials. So I experimented with everyday objects and tools. I had brought some photographic paper and I scratched its surface with pencils, knives, cutters, even my nails. The results were absorbingly interesting and some of the first works I produced after my hiatus were in this medium."

In 2009, Adeel-uz Zafar and a few fellow artists decided that too many artists were limiting themselves to small-scale works, either due to inadequate studio and gallery spaces or because of the inordinate focus on miniature, and decided it was time to extend the terrain. "We felt it was time to go big but we were addressing other concerns too. We had noticed that in a gallery full of small works, audiences spent little time engaging with each piece, hurrying on to the next image in less than 4 to 5 seconds."

The artists debated the complexities and repercussions of working in large sizes, and named their show 'Size Does Matter' held at VM Art Gallery, showing only one piece each. Zafar sourced plastic vinyl as his medium of choice in a 7 by 11ft panel. He used a toy pony and ensconced it in yards of bandage and then scratched the image on to the surface of the vinyl with cutters and needles, meticulously representing the cross hatching weave of the material in superb detail, while maintaining the shape of the object hidden from direct eye-contact. Zafar set the baseline measure of the challenge high, making it more demanding and onerous through this technique of nicking, grating, and scuffing out rather than depositing on, as in most artworks.

"It was the same voice in my head telling me I should raise the bar for myself. It would have been simpler to use a pencil or a marker and create a similar effect. But why make it easier if you can make it harder?" What transformed Zafar's work then and continues to do so today is the fact that the linear striations are irreversible and cannot be erased or modified once the line has been indelibly gouged into the surface. "At the most, I can manipulate the fold of the gauze but I cannot delete any line once I have made it." The image exhibited at the VM Gallery turned out to be the piece de resistance of the show and for Zafar it was the re-start of a career that took off running.

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Since then, Zafar has gone on to create many large vinyl pieces in the same scale, using similar thematic presumptions. He uses stuffed toy animals as his central form because they "...reflect the innocence of childhood and a primeval need for security during adolescence. But you will detect that there is also something sinister about the object because it is hidden from view and is bandaged." Zafar's subliminal allusion is that the object is broken or wounded and requires salvation. The idea points to a loss of innocence and to the disintegration and implosion of our socio-political framework.

More recently, Adeel-uz-Zafar has used the iconic figures of Mickey Mouse and King Kong, both associated with western pop culture and interestingly, they exchange referential positions. Mickey Mouse who is traditionally adorable and lovable is shrouded and mysterious so as to denote a guise under which he operates, alluding to the global reach of the culture of consumerism and materialism. By concealing him, Zafar makes Mickey Mouse reveal his true identity as the insidious hand of western influence.

On the other hand, King Kong who is supposedly the epitome of evil and destruction is unravelled in Zafar's work, more exposed than perhaps any other object in his oeuvre, signifying the true nature of a beast that is actually tender at heart in spite of his appearance but is ruthlessly caught and caged by humans and eventually killed.

Adeel-uz-Zafar is the kind of artist who operates in a series of parallel universes that do not coincide but instead co-exist amicably. When viewed from the perspective of the collective consciousness, unification, accord and association all become evident. Yet this point of view perplexes and perturbs audiences because they have become accustomed to identifying with the complexities of dichotomy and paradox for which they seem to have a morbid fascination. Tell viewers that black and white or truth and falsehood as universal paradoxes exist within an artwork and they lap it up with great gusto and exuberance. But paradoxes are traps which artists and audiences unwittingly fall into because it wraps up the ambiguities of life in a neat, easily consumed bundle.

A perfect example is the symbolic representation of yin and yang, the ultimately conflicting dichotomy, exhibited in a tidy, well-designed package for the consumer to absorb and ingest. But in reality, even the most efficient paradoxes are blurred by inconsistencies and in fact it is these that lead us towards authenticity and away from kitsch. Zafar's dichotomies are esoteric like this -- blurred by grey areas and all the more interesting because of it.

Talking about the path he plans to trek in his future work, Zafar says, "I want to experiment now with smaller scale and see where it takes me. In a recent piece, I added three-dimensional animal figures and used the rolls of unravelled gauze more as a semiotic element than a representation of textural significance. Also I have realised that my vision is becoming darker and I am not sure if that is good for my art or detrimental to it. Let's see what the future holds."

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***Aasim Akhtar** Aasim Akhtar is an artist, art critic and curator. He studied English Literature in addition to earning a BA in Design from the National College of Arts, Lahore. He was a curator-in-residence at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Japan in 2002. His curatorial practice includes An Idea of Perfection: National Exhibition of Photography (2004), The Figurative Impulse (2007), The Nocturnal Song: Interpretations on the Theme of Night (2008), The Line Unleashed (2010), Pachydermal (2010) and Silent Decibels (2010). His writing is published in magazines, catalogues, books and journals, both nationally and internationally, and his art work has been widely exhibited, more recently at Whitechapel Gallery, London, as part of a commemorative show entitled, 'Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (2010). He is the author of two published books: Regards Croises: Peshawar and The Distant Steppe: Indus Kohistan, and has just finished writing his third, Dialogues with Threads: Traditions of Embroidery in Hazara. He teaches Art Appreciation at Fatima Jinnah Women's University in Rawalpindi. Lives and works in Islamabad, Pakistan.*

Akhtar, Asim. "Celebrating the Drift", Libas International, p.306-312, 2010

On encountering Adeel uz Zafar's drawings for the first time one feels a rare moment of instant intrigue. The quirkiness yet vulnerability of his work immediately connect with the viewer as we attempt to decipher the language used, the relationship between the drawings, the contradictions within their apparent personalities.

Strangely familiar twisted beings inhabited to be uncomfortable inside their skins perhaps, struggling to escape. Certain pieces appeared to be juvenile, awkward and needy, both shy and attention seeking. Other works commanded a more authoritative presence, older and perhaps wiser. Using a variety of techniques like wrapping, binding and modeling, Zafar constructs and alters his forms.

Each drawing evolved organically and intuitively over a period of several weeks undergoing some dramatic changes in terms of size and orientation. They finally emerged from his studio as bizarre, otherworldly life forms distinct personalities.

The development of Zafar's work over the past three years has been remarkable. His early work focused more on the structure of the objects he started with transforming them in ways that still retained their basic form, a skeleton that was visible beneath the skin of the materials he was using

Later drawings pushed the boundaries of the complexity as several objects were combined together. Protruding limbs and genitalia, lumpy hairy, knotted skin was created using textures. Enamel paints and the muted tones suggested alien and otherworldly beings. Zafar is interested in animal beings and human nature; how we as conscious beings interact with one another and our different levels of identification and understanding, or lack of it. This duality of feeling was evident throughout the exhibition, ugly yet cute, scary yet vulnerable, alien with the element of humanity.

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Akhtar, Asim. "Encore", R.M Studio Residency Exhibition, p.3, Ejaz Gallery, Lahore, 2010

One mural-sized drawing composed of rectangles and two small-sized panels employ the hatching and cross-hatching techniques found in old copperplate engravings or the wood-block chiaroscuro prints typical of sixteenth-century graphics in **Adeel uz Zafar's** work. Of course, Zafar's works are not prints, but he has got the myriad parallel curves of the chiaroscuro print down pat. Taking the replica of a stag or reindeer dressed in gauze bandage as his leitmotif and blowing it up twenty times its size, the artist offers a topography of shape-shifting that is purely Lucretian in its appetite for the mutability of matter that boils at the base of cellular life. Yet he leaves the animal form covered in the finest particulate of mesh gauze, at once compensatory and dismal, so that the oneiric sweetness of redemption still stings on the tongue, weighted by grieving, sharpened by a taste of irony, and always, relentlessly, invoking the sleight of hand and terrors of change.

What is so appealing about Zafar's drawing is the way the artist has transformed the toy animal into something completely unrecognizable. As is usual for him, the artist filled the form by spinning a web of gauze bandage that appears penetrable but in fact takes over everything. One cannot help but hope to find a gap amid all the strings, but he weaves things into his net with a sense of finality. Zafar's art at first suggests a lyrical aesthetic, but it is the opposite of liberating. One might even say it's a bit cynical or mocking. His manner of hatching marks on a Rexine/vinyl covered with a coating of matte enamel mixed with acrylic pigment, that appear as strands of yarn project a sense of insubstantiality, of the poetic and ephemeral. The chaos that arises and its attendant impenetrability are, on the one hand, both obsessive and brutal. These thread-like marks have a firm grip on the space and the object – there is no escape. The present work captures Adeel uz Zafar's evolving facility as his hand becomes more fluent and the emotional sweep of the work comes to balance barbarity and tenderness with increasing eloquence and lightness though always holding the mournful gravity of a eulogist. Equally winning are the smaller drawings of a deer with gold antlers, a Christmas card-like study for Thanksgiving. Titled 'Awakening I and II', the mammal can now probably fight its way out of human bondage and trap by using its antlers as a shield of defence.

Akhtar, Asim. "The Rising Tide - New directions in Art from Pakistan 1990 -2010", p.167, The Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, 2010

Humans like to think they can control cities because they are the ones building them, but trying to comprehend their living essence, all we grasp is thin air. The city, that entity which lies beneath the web of codes and signs we weave, reveals itself only in glimpses, in instants separated by intervals, in the glint of light in the fog, in the shadow of our dreams. Its essence flits through our minds like a beast shimmering in the thicket. Now you see it, now you don't, but you sense its presence. "You can hunt for it," Marco Polo tells the great Khan in Italo Calvino's Cities, "but only in the way I have said." This is the beast we see shimmering, scattered, fragmented, but eerily present nonetheless, in the work of Adeel uz Zafar. He hunts in his own way, following its trail, exploring the track it leaves behind, either in his inner self or out on the streets, only to capture it and mask its countenance with thick layers of bandage.

Planted in our consciousness like seeds, the image grows over time, pollinating our imagination. As a cognitive organism, it branches out to reach a point of contact with others, and another web of ideas and meanings is woven. Suddenly, we are overcome by the strange sensation of knowing something, without quite knowing what that thing might be. We look again, and for a moment we see it staring straight at us, that shimmering beast. Then, in the blink of an eye, it is gone again. Cities seem to mirror our state of mind and reveal secrets that can be decoded when minute details are looked at: it is between the lines that Zafar seeks ambiguities and contradictions. Not that his work can in any way be reduced to or read transparently as a reflection of identity, but rather that his awareness of visual language as always political, in its ability to demarcate exclusion as well as inclusion, has been shaped by his particular experience of the urban landscape.

The sense of a tactile threat to vision – an almost primal fear of injury to the most vulnerable sense organs – is apparent in this image, and that threat is mobilised precisely to point up how profoundly imbricated visuality is with substance of things.

It has become a symbol of language's potential to escape frozen meaning and unequivocal certainty; it is the line of flight created by the conversion of the real to the site of inscription: It is error, invisibility, and the possibility of change.

Deepika Shetty is one of the leading Arts Correspondent in Singapore. Currently she works for The Straits Times.

Shetty, Deepika. "Floored by Pakistani Artists", The Straits Times [Singapore], p. E10, 4 June, 2010

It is not often that you come across an artist who uses a flooring material as his canvas. But -35-years old Pakistani artist Adeel uz Zafar does just that.

He uses the reverse side of the plastic vinyl sheets that often cover the floor in homes in Pakistan. He cuts up these sheets, transforms them into his canvas and uses instruments such as cutter blades to engrave fine lines on the black vinyl.

Adeel is one of the five contemporary artists in a group show titled On the Brink that opened last night in Singapore, just a week after a sell- out show of Pakistani art here at the Societe Generale Private Banking Gallery.

Adeel's untitled work, for example, which features soft toys wrapped in layers of bandages, reflects the latter aspect.

The artist tells Life!: "the gauze (of the bandages) has so many connotations. It is a reflection of what is happening all around my country. Everything is bandaged in layers. I often wonder what happens to the wounded soul after the body has healed."

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Madhvi Subrahmanian, a ceramic artist, was born and brought up in Mumbai, India and has lived in USA, Germany and currently lives and works in Singapore. Currently she works as a full-time artist and a freelance art reviewer for Business Times, Singapore Press Holdings.

Subrahmanian, Madhvi. "Art In troubled times", The Business Times [Singapore], p.30, 4 June, 2010

Adeel uz Zafar addresses social concerns. In one of Adeel's works titled Awakening II, a teddy bear is engraved in plastic vinyl with painted gold leaf horns. Adeel says that "the object itself has many connotations but partially wrapped in a gauze, it is a representation of how people wrap themselves in layers to deceive others and to conceal their real circumstances but true thoughts are emerging with the golden horns and some sort of awakening is happening in the society.

Husna Anwar is a sub-editor for the Karachi pages of The Express Tribune. The Express Tribune in partnership with The International Herald Tribune is the first Pakistani newspaper offering global perspectives and local news.

Anwar, Husna. 'While one artist waits for the dust to settle, the other scratches out an existence', The Express Tribune Karachi [Pakistan], p.15, 18 February, 2011

The majority of art students at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and Karachi Grammar School know Adeel uz Zafar as Sir Adeel, the long-suffering art teacher who never raises his voice. In the real world of art, however, he is an artist who has commanded the respect of his peers for his work ethic and innovative style.

Discussing his own work, Zafar reveals that what appear to be three-dimensional prints are actually meticulously hand-etched pieces of art. "It took me about three months to finish that one, I put in four or five hours a day," he stated matter-of-factly when asked about his larger than life, 64 by 106 inch portrait of Mickey Mouse etched on Vinyl. His subjects were stuffed toys wrapped in bandages, every thread traced out by hand.

"I used to illustrate for children's books and textbooks, I've worked for almost every major publishing company in the country," said Zafar, citing his inspiration. Once he was posted in a remote northern area of the country, where there was a scarcity of mediums. So when he found some photographic film and a blade he thought 'why not?' and began etching images. After that, he was inspired to investigate substitutes for paints and surfaces.

"I have been interested in working on a large scale," says his artist statement. "Small toys blown up to monstrous sizes with the intricacies manifested in the concealing weaves of cloth. Such details open many connotations regarding furtive and ambiguous identity. I associate my perpetual dealing with the children's subjects as the core of my imagery development."

The "benignly sweet or threateningly sinister" stuffed toys were a jab at the "ridiculous parodies, criticism, pejorative and censorship worldwide", he added.

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Gemma Sharpe is a writer from London, currently living in Karachi. She has completed an MFA from Goldsmiths and worked for the ICA in London, Afterall, Gasworks and the Triangle Arts Trust. She has published widely in Europe and South Asia.

Sharpe, Gemma. *Artist in Focus* (interview), VASL Online Newsletter, Issue No. 20, Feb-May

GS: Your work has become identified for your method of etching delicate lines into a black painted surface or photographic paper, and so revealing the white layer beneath. Your images are the culmination of these thousands of scratches. When and how was this method introduced into your practice?

AUZ: In my college days I used to work in a very conventional way with oil paints. But after graduating from National College of Arts (NCA) in 1998 I became involved in the work of creating illustrations for children's storybooks and reading materials. While working on these assignments I got a chance to live in the comparatively remote and isolated Northern areas of Pakistan and it was here that I began producing images on photographic paper. I was making drawings etched into paper with a knife because in that context conventional art materials were hard to come by. In the beginning however, my drawings on the sensitive drawing paper were rather more whimsical and imaginative than they are now.

GS: Could you talk more about how working as an illustrator has influenced the content of your imagery? Further, has illustration influenced the way that you produce your images? So how you decide to stage and render objects in your work?

AUZ: Working as an illustrator has helped me to investigate and experiment with different mediums and techniques. I strongly feel that the linear quality of my work, along with its intricacy, has a direct relation to how I produced my illustrations. As an illustrator I also worked in a 3D-animation post-production house. The way that the imagery in my work creates, on a two-dimensional surface, the illusion of a three-dimensional form, has a connection with the knowledge I obtained working on assignments at that time. The practice of making a grid, concentrating on the light source, and the texture and surface of the image, are all important when you're making a character seem 'alive' within a moving image. In my work I am dealing all of these aspects of image production in my own way. To make my recent works I have bandaged a stuffed toy, observed the object in detail, and under a constant studio light, tried to transform my investigation of the object into an artwork by etching it onto a surface. While illustrating professionally I would work on children's storybooks and I was dealing with projects full of fascinating characters, creatures and animals. The content of this imagery, and those characters, keeps returning to my artwork and I've been influenced in this regard.

GS: You often use objects from a globalized 'pop' visual culture in your work – Mickey Mouse or King Kong, for example. Despite their originating from a North American visual culture, these objects can seem quite 'neutral' because of their global recognition. This leaves room for the interpretation of your work wide open. How important is it to you that a viewer recognizes that your artworks also speak of a Pakistani culture and were created by a Pakistani artist?

AUZ: Mickey Mouse and 'The Kong' are two fictional and ageless characters that I have been familiar with since my childhood. What they speak of history and the modern world in which I am living has provoked me to use them in my work. Identity is important for me and I would like to be viewed within the context of the historical, cultural, social and political background that constitutes my origin and the country in which I live. I cannot deny the fact that things are changing around us, and that we are living in a global and a metropolitan environment. It seems interesting, however, that if my work accepts 'global images' then it can also be looked at with a number of different perspectives. I am not orthodox or a fundamentalist and I'm open to all new ideas.

Articles/ Reviews & Publications

Adeel uz Zafar

Historically, Asian art has this tendency to demonstrate its own craftsmanship, and it often has a linear quality – take for example Chinese prints, Indian miniatures and mythological sculptures, and Iranian calligraphy, etc. Art practices can be divided and differentiated according to different regions, but extracting something from your origin, and blending that with your understanding of globalization in the contemporary world is a way to step ahead.

GS: You practice from a studio at home. Aside from the works that we know from group exhibitions here in Pakistan, are there other experiments taking place in your studio?

AUZ: Besides making these larger works I do sketch, and I teach O and A level art which means that I'm demonstrating different techniques to the students and therefore playing around with other mediums and colors in the classroom. I also work with life drawing and I have been doing printmaking – recently participating in printmaking workshop at Indus Valley with Australian printmaker Michael Kempson. My hand-drawn etchings and my printmaking practice have a connection and I would love to investigate that further and I am planning for that. In my studio I keep experimenting with how the etching works function on different surfaces. More recently I am experimenting digital printed canvasses.

It is a very painstaking technique, but making a drawing – in any medium – through careful and technical marks, is far easier for me than scratching a surface. When you scratch the surface like this the mark is irreversible and impossible to correct if you make a mistake. But I like to take that pain! It is a kind of meditation and it also gives me a chance to check my patience and tolerance.

GS: Could you also talk about scale? You seem to be at your happiest when you're working on large surfaces.

AUZ: I have been interested in working on a large scale since my college days. Previously I would join small pieces of work together in order to create large installations. Now I am reversing that process by zooming in on a small object and rendering it on a large scale. There is a strong culture for making small artworks here – largely due to a lack of space, commercial influences and institutional limitations – so I do feel that in terms of display my works are a visual treat for audiences. In production, every size presents a challenge though working on a large scale involves such artistic and technical issues as surface manipulation, surface preparation, and the troubleshooting of physical logistics in the studio. While working on these larger images I literally have to do gymnastics! But these problems just make working on a large scale all the more interesting for me!

GS: Where do you see the development of this work heading now?

AUZ: I can see a development in my work that is quite subtle, and not perhaps obvious at first. The characters I represent are beginning to 'unhide' themselves – emerging from the bandages, for example. I don't want to push things to change too quickly and I want a natural progression to take place across the imagery. There are so many possibilities to examine within this particular technique that I'm applying. I'm exploring its potential and its limitations, while waiting for the right time to reveal new changes.