

# The expressive subcontinent

**'Horizons Within' exhibition explores the versatility and substantive nature of Pakistan's contemporary art**

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PAKISTAN'S CONTEMPORARY ART needs no introduction. It has been too versatile to be defined and too substantive to be explained. Being cognisant of this outstanding nature, after a successful group show last May, Villano6 has brought up another exceptional collection of Pakistani contemporary art for connoisseurs in the Emirates. This collection, entitled 'Horizons Within' not only includes some of last exhibition's favourite artists but also showcases the work of exciting new talent never before seen in the UAE.

"There is no dearth of new talent in Pakistan," says Omer Alvie, Creative Director of Villano6 and curator of the exhibition. "The growing interest in Pakistani art globally is a result of exceptional art being produced by Pakistani artists. The work is not only beautiful but socially and politically relevant, which makes it even more exciting for a new audience to view and experience."

In addition to popular contemporary artists such as Qamar, Salman Farooqi, and Rabia Dawood, who have garnered critical and commercial success both within and outside Pakistan, the work of emerging new artists will also be on display at the exhibition.

Amongst the new names is artist Ali Akbar, an exemplary practitioner of contemporary miniature art; Saqiba Haq, one of the country's most promising young female artists; calligrapher Arfeen, an increasingly popular self-taught artist; and Irfan Haider, a remarkable new artist who's fast making a name for himself

throughout the country.

Ali Akbar's interest is primarily cultural and so he studies and researches the norms, customs and religions within societies including Pakistan. "I ask question myself regarding differences in cultures and how I fit within the values and traditions of each society," says Akbar to City Times. These answers are then depicted in his paintings.

One of his favourite pieces at the exhibition is 'Accepted Region II'. "The circle represents the earth," Akbar explains. "The female figure draped in purple cloth represents a conservative yet extremely modern working woman who makes a place for herself in society. The coloured circle represents this woman's actions in life. The multiple colours draped on the circle represent the beauty of her thoughts translated to action. The barren white surface represents life on which her actions have left an indelible mark."

Irfan Mirza is influenced by global events. Be it natural disasters or wars, his work tends to focus on human suffering. The exhibited works are based on a singular theme of 'Destruction'.

"The theme reflects the destruction happening all over the world," explains Mirza. "The distorted figures in my art reflect the loss of life. Be it an extremist initiated act of terror or the indiscriminate bombing of 'alleged' terrorist targets, the result is always the same; the loss of innocent life. I try to reflect some positive aspects even in such extreme scenarios in my art pieces. The sun and the birds are the sense of hope in my personal view. Ultimately it is hope that sustains life."



Irfan Mirza's artworks are influenced by global events like natural disasters and wars

These days Mirza's creative process is heavily consistent with the news in print or on television. "The result is vivid imagery and visuals that fill my mind, which eventually end up in my art that helps address the need for cathartic release. The ultimate satisfaction is primarily derived when my work is viewed and understood by others," he adds.

Earlier, Saqiba Haq's focus revolved around the 'personal' in an attempt to convey her innermost feelings and expressions, but in recent days environment has started influencing her in a strong way and therefore her body of work reflects reactions and thoughts on what is happening in Pakistan.

"I have been experimenting with different concepts says Saqiba. "In one of my paintings, for instance, I have tried to create an illusion with two-dimensional and three-dimensional images and the relationship between them. I am using a two-dimensional surface to create a three-dimensional effect and for me, flower have always had a very strong relationship with the female figure. The end result reflects a sense of fantasy which is open to different interpretations."

"I believe everyone has a creative impulse inside them; the question is what sort of outlet one chooses to channel that creativity. For me naturally, the canvas is my creative outlet. I derive satisfaction from the painting process and I keep adding and amending my work until I am totally satisfied with whatever subject I am trying to depict. It can be very time consuming but I feel a real sense of achievement in the end," Saqiba adds.

The exhibition is a perfect example of the high quality comprising Pakistani art today. "It is a very exciting time," Omer beams. "The interest in and demand for Pakistani art will be further nurtured and enhanced through exciting exhibitions such as this one. It requires a lot of planning and detailed review of new work from each artist."

"Primarily, our aim is to introduce a few new talented artists at each of our exhibitions. This is in tandem with our goal of bringing work that not only deserves a wide global audience but also caters to the ever-increasing demand of Villano6's regular clientele which is eager to see new artists and styles of work," he concluded.

## EVENT DETAILS

'Horizon Within' will run till October 21 at the 4 Wall Art Gallery in Dubai.



In Saqiba Haq's work flowers have a strong relationship with the female figure