

Synthesis of Art of the West and Muslim World: A Study of two Pakistani Artists Ghulam Rasul and Huma Mulji Through the Motif of the Buffalo

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Abstract

Throughout the history of mankind, one has found evidence of motifs scratched out or painted on cave walls and on various artifacts, closely associating with the immediate surroundings of people who left behind those traces. Likewise, motifs used by artists may hold significance to their immediate surroundings. A look into the reoccurring symbolic motif of the water buffalo ubiquitous in Pakistan by two artists gives variegated points of view. The article aims to situate the work in an original art context to connect two Pakistani Artists, Ghulam Rasul (1942- 2009) and Huma Mulji (1970) separated by a generation. (fig.I) It consists of a short monograph. It relies mainly on the direct study of one painting and an interview with Ghulam Rasul in 2009, considered significant because this painting triggered Ghulam's career into fame and because the subject matter of the buffalo stands as symbolic to Punjab. An investigation of the path Ghulam Rasul followed leads the research to the artwork produced by Huma Mulji, who has likewise used the buffalo motif. It concurs ideas from two different art movements, Modern Art and Contemporary Art in Pakistan. It puts in evidence the synthesis of Western Art with Pakistan Art and denotes the ever-present exchange of ideas and motifs from around the world.

Keywords: Motif, emblematic, idea, concur, Modern Art, Contemporary Art



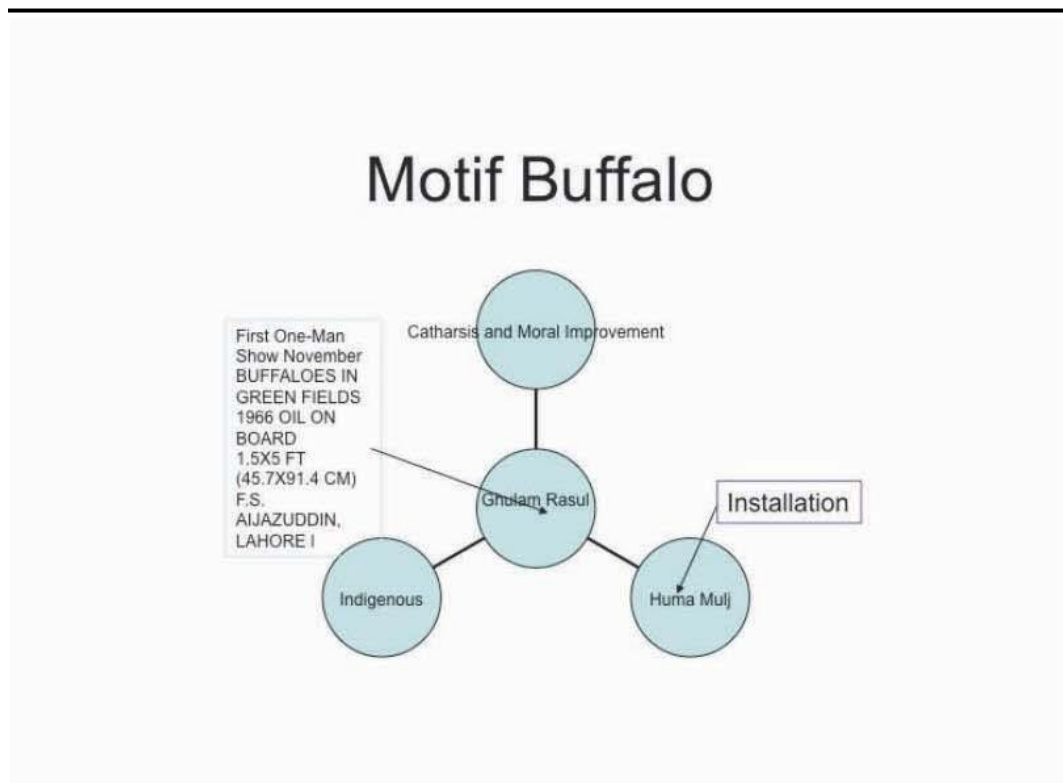


Figure 1. Graph Motif Buffalo

Introduction

Methodology – Monograph

Ghulam Rasul studied in Pakistan and in the USA. He painted in Pakistan; he worked with and through the Pakistan art Establishment. One could draw from his academic life that he is a “perfect case” for total immersion in western art, but his philosophy takes him a long way into the inner soul of Pakistan. The means of expression developed by him are original and all his own. Background influences are all important in the case of the painter Ghulam Rasul (1942-2009), who is recognized as a modern painter of Pakistan. Tracking back in time would prove crucial when taking the Partition, the migration, and the phenomenal creation of the nation of Pakistan as a point of departure in the art history of Pakistan, and Ghulam Rasul belongs to all three generations.

Ghulam Rasul’s desire to study art starts in his early childhood. His distant memories recall his love for flora and fauna, for the birds and animals and

nature. He remembers an instinctive desire to capture and preserve what he saw immediately at the time of his first access to the camera. What does Art represent for the Artist? Ghulam Rasul would say that he was an artist, is still an artist and will always stay an artist. What started as a desire was to become a necessity for Ghulam Rasul, something within him, his sense of art, gives him life. Art is both a suffering and a pleasure. Paradox Ghulam Rasul does not act as a bohemian nor a *malang* but is aware that life would have been unbearable without fulfilling his desire in the arts. Passion-driven Ghulam Rasul has abandoned himself, however, with a firm grip on reality.

Ghulam Rasul sobers down when he describes his artistic activity. Firstly the heart and soul of the artist vibrate, but to freely sour into experimental, analytical, philosophical depth and abyss, one must have learned the skills. He would speak of this as that of an artisan whose sheer commitment to learning, understanding, and mastering a skill allows the artist finally to synthesize hand and passion. Humbly Ghulam Rasul values himself as a relentless art student, constantly learning. Anna Molka Ahmed and Khalid Iqbal nurtured Ghulam Rasul's formative years at the University of Punjab. Later he studied in the USA at Northern Illinois University and again later.

The Painting that Brought Fame to Ghulam Rasul

The Buffaloes in Green Fields, is an oil on hardboard measuring one foot and a half by 5 ft (45.7x91.4 cm) (Figure 2) presented in the painter's first solo show, held at the Fine Arts Department at the University of Punjab in November 1966, at the behest of his teacher and by then colleague Anna Molka (1917-1994). In his words, this was to be 'a fundamental show'. "At night one night, one very warm and muggy night, I was lying in my room thinking about painting. I remember thinking about what a painting would look like if I had a variety of greens stretching for a far, far expanse with a few buffaloes roaming on it. The buffaloes would be black and blue on the variety of greens, it would be cool colours with cool colours, and I decided that I would paint it in the morning and see how it looks." And so the painting was born and exhibited in his first One-Man Show in November.¹

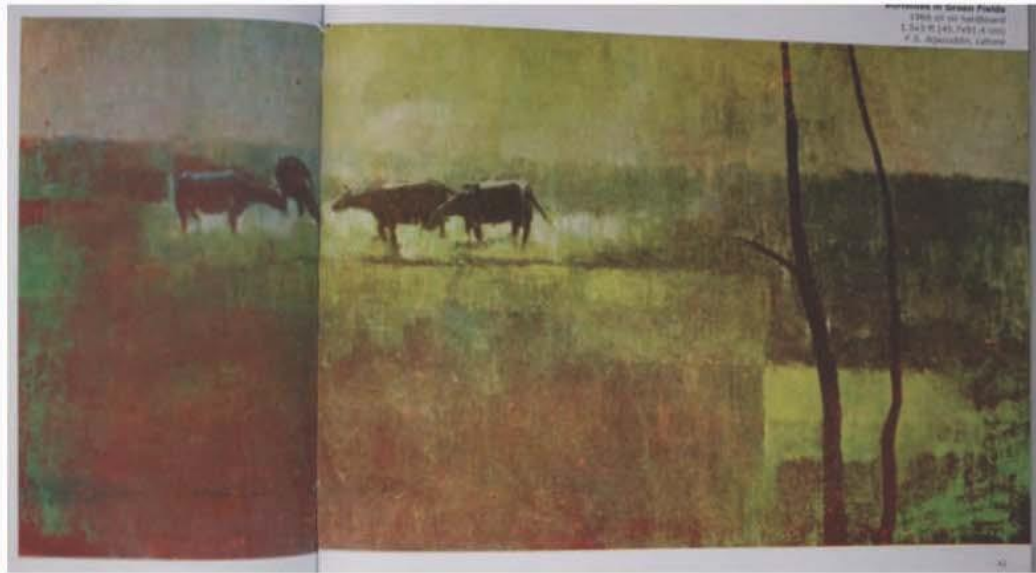


Figure 2. *The Buffaloes in Green Fields*, 1966 Oil on hard board, 1.5x5 ft (45.7x91.4 cm)

The main objects or elements in this painting are the water buffaloes. It is a landscape of fields in Punjab, featuring a herd of domestic and indigenous animals found all over Asia, grazing and standing. The artist has depicted and handled the motif in silhouette and evokes tranquility, almost dream-like and an oblivious state the subject has towards the onlooker.

Buffaloes in Green Fields 1966 is an “oil on hardboard. Hardboard - as a base to paint pictures dates back to the 1960s” the use of the hard board in Pakistan must have begun sometime in the ‘60s and ‘is generally used by Pakistani artist until the present day.’ It ‘was a composite or aggregate mixture of wood chips and glue that was initially sold by building suppliers as a wall covering. (Sheetrock is the common name in America). It was flexible and was often affixed to a wooden frame by nails; if the painting was to be a large one, there will sometimes be auxiliary nail heads within the picture area attaching to underneath stretchers for support. The surface was usually given an undercoating of white paint. Not only was hardboard considerably less expensive than canvas and less time consuming to prepare, but it withstood the extremes of Pakistani weather without sagging or drying out.’² The

subjective point of view depends entirely on both the viewer and the artist. "After his successful one-man show", Agha- Fawad continues that 'his definitely Pakistani paintings were making an impact on Pakistan's art'... his art 'brought the raw wilderness and austerity of life in the villages, to the educated, urban elite in Pakistan. Two different worlds living parallel to one another finally intersected. "A buffalo could fit into no schemes at all; besides, it was abominable to mention such an animal in polite society. Today we have Ghulam Rasul, who not only paints buffaloes but also gets his work accepted among his contemporaries, the new generations of painters, as paintings of very high merit. "Hameed Sheikh wrote this in *The Pakistan Times* following the one man show at the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Punjab in September of 1968." Agha- Fawad goes as far as to say that Ghulam Rasul had 'made the intersection between the East and the West.'³ Amjad Ali says that the buffalo 'became his (Ghulam Rasul) signature, and he was praised for introducing this unusual but aesthetic touch in his landscapes.'⁴

The cultural frame is far from complete but gives a general idea of the background of cultural heritage that at the time seemed far heavier from the societal point of view. There were far less art teachers and far less art schools at the time. The medium and the compositional stress on the artwork were contemporary. The artist at that time was not creating or producing art in the vein of questioning art itself. He was making for the sake of art and containing an aura of mastery of craft to bring forward a work that would be an appreciation vehicle for the spectator. The relationship between the artist and the spectator was that of civic communication. This one could say is an aesthetic element, which many contemporary artists still favour in Pakistan.

In her book *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan*, Sirhandi writes that 'one of the most easily defined and homogenous movements in Pakistan painting is the Punjabi Landscape School.' Sirhandi continues that 'Khalid Iqbal stands at the head of this movement as its initiator and driving force. As teacher, colleague or friend, his impact and influence on Lahore artists is incalculable and has had personal contact with every painter in this category. Members of the group include Zulquarnain Haider, Shahid Jalal (1948-2020), Iqbal Ahmed, Ghulam Rasul, Ijaz ul Hassan (1940), Misbahuddin Qazi (1946),

Mohammad Nazir, and Iqbal Hussain. A few are landscape painters exclusively, but most paint additional subjects. Some follow Khalid Iqbal's style closely; others have their style. They all have in common is a concern for realism and for capturing the essence of the "land of the five rivers."⁵

Ghulam Rasul's development of the structural frame with the focus on the water buffalo as the subject of his painting is exemplary and "anthropomorphizes" the motif, in a subjective view, as the cultural heritage of the Punjabi and objectively as a man in nature. "Ghulam Rasul said that he searched for a style in reaction against Moyene Najmi and Raheel Akbar, that is, against their abstract form. He wanted something more emblematic than a garden and a mosque, as in Najmi's paintings, or the colourful subjectivity of Raheel Akbar." According to Naqvi, he has found the 'totem of his land in the water buffalo', which is an emphatic triumphant.⁶

Ijazul Hassan does not appear to be much moved by the motif of the Buffalo. He is more interested in the style in which the artist has evolved. In his *Paintings in Pakistan* 1991, 1996, he finds Ghulam Rasul's 'recent work has undergone a dramatic change, although the subject matter has remained unchanged: landscape and village scenes, streets and alleys populated by working men, woman and children, and of course, his typical herd of buffaloes reposing under verdant canopies, or aimlessly posted in fields or ambling across the picture frame.'⁷

It has aesthetic qualities that create a mood for the viewer of a tranquil and dreamy space that feels familiar, yet it has a faraway sensation as doors are opened on memories. It evokes nostalgia, not melancholic but of a slower pace of life in absolute contradiction with the actual pace of life. It allows the atmosphere to evolve with the same sensations. It complements the condition in which the artist visualized and produced this work.

An interpretation of this work could demonstrate the significance that nature is a natural source of inspiration at many levels. Throughout history, human beings have looked to nature for inspiration. The symbolic meaning on a subliminal level evokes the role human beings play in life yet they cannot alienate themselves from nature, a whole life source without which existence would cease to be as we know it. The human being holds ground near his roots and seldom does he succeed in failing it. His biological roots are not

only as in terms of social backgrounds but, more primal, the absolute dependency he has on what nature offers him. The spectator is an onlooker of these creatures who are oblivious to his gaze. Buffaloes can dream!

This painting was regarded as the 'centre of attraction' during Ghulam Rasul's first solo exhibition held in 1966. Subjectively, it spoke of simple notions of familiar landscapes most people had in Pakistan at that time of their childhoods. Interesting, the water buffalo is far from only being present in the rural landscape of Pakistan. The buffalo is currently and ubiquitously present in the urban centres all over Pakistan too.

The painting evokes tranquility and gentleness yet, it remains faithful to its well-grounded personality. It reflects cultural ideas of urban/rural...and at the time of its creation of the nostalgia for ones roots that were strongly felt then and are still present. However, Rasul has treated this awkward subject with delicacy and mastery of diplomacy. The artist has used of the eastern values of civility in polite company to avoid malaise yet has been able to say his thoughts without uttering them but having them perceived by those interested or lucid. It clearly states the love for nature and its omnipresence. The water buffalo can be perceived as a symbol communicating messages or notions of the parallel and coexisting lives in Punjab's rural and urban landscapes and in a universal content of the economical difference in societal developments. The use of the water buffalo, which is neither unusual in context nor in visual interpretations however, relates to a specific place and particular indigenous people, either or those who have displaced themselves to those parts of the globe where these animals roam. It is a permanent feature in memories and landscapes hence instantly recognizable. This instant recognition provides the emblematic quality it holds.

Huma Mulji's Taxidermy Installation: a Follow-up Case

Huma Mulji (1970) work reviewed below as an example, comes in the wake of the emblematic buffalo keeps its aesthetic elements, and exploits the subject, the medium for impact in a diametrically opposite manner. With expressions of another era, through a selection of expressive choices opens "other doors" to artistic creation in Pakistan. The way the work is conceived is new; the matter is similar.

It begins with the installation 'High Rise' in NCA in March 2008. 'High Rise' travels and is on display until June 20th at Elementa Gallery, Mulji's first solo show in Dubai; however, this is not the first time her work had travelled to the UAE. *Heavenly Heights* taxidermy Buffalo, Metal Rods, Powder Coated Steel, Cotton wool, Ceramic and Cable Dimensions: 171" x 74" x 118" (434.3 cm x 188 cm x 300 cm) 2009. (Figure 3) and *Her Suburban Dream* Taxidermic Buffalo, Metal rods, Duco Paint, Welded Sheet Metal, Cotton Wool. Dimensions: 30" x 39" x 130" (330.2 cm x 76.2 cm x 99 cm) 2009. (Figure 4)



Figure 3. *Heavenly Heights* taxidermy Buffalo, Metal Rods, Powder Coated Steel, Cotton wool, Ceramic and Cable Dimensions: 171" x 74" x 118" (434.3 cm x 188 cm x 300 cm) 2009.

Figure 4. *Her Suburban Dream* Taxidermic Buffalo, Metal rods, Duco Paint, Welded Sheet Metal, Cotton Wool. Dimensions: 30" x 39" x 130" (330.2 cm x 76.2 cm x 99 cm) 2009

The subject of both these art pieces is essentially that of environmental/ecological concern, which touches upon political concerns, and marginally that of gender issues. The artist has combined features from architectural structures and objects such as 'ready-made' concrete pipes and electricity pylons (created by the artist) along with taxidermy water buffaloes. It is a dialogue between what is organic and natural and what is artificial,

chemical and synthetic. It is about the relationship of nature and artificial objects. It is a subject of events into the dreams and the subliminal realms.



Her Suburban Dream (Installation View)
Taxidermic Buffalo, Metal rods, Duco Paint, Welded Sheet Metal, Cotton Wool
Dimensions:
30" x 39" x 130" (330.2 cm x 76.2 cm x 99 cm)
2009



HOUSING SCHEME 1
Collage, charcoal on paper
2008



HIGH RISE
Collage on paper
2008

The subject broadens onto urban/rural/suburban societal realities people face on economic, discrimination, poverty, education and other cultural aspects. It is a dialogue of all the connotations and aspects between the agrarian and the city dwellers and the in-betweens. It opens onto the undergoing development and underdevelopment, which in turn draws comparisons of the underdeveloped nations or the Third World with the developed world. This opens up onto issues of economic relationship and setbacks between the Third World and the developed world. It further broadens onto notions of 'might is right' bringing forward world power such as 'hyper-power' and 'super-power' and of economic dominance. All on a long shot echoes in the distance how economic dominance is achieved, which takes on a new face - that of discriminatory takeover and invasions on both physical and virtual levels of lands and cultures via soft wars and brutal wars. From a subjective point of view, the spectator and artist are free to express their personal experiences. Since installations may be temporary or permanent, site-specific or not, serving from and delving into documentation, studying and appropriating a critique in selected works created by Huma Mulji suffices. The effectiveness of taxidermy stimulates the reactions and emotions of the spectator. Mulji's creative process "acknowledges that

taxidermy is an inevitable attention grabber but, she views it as just another one in a progression of sculptural materials and one discovered by accident while drawing camels at Lahore zoo. She met the resident taxidermist and concluded that the medium was exactly what was needed for the work to tell this dark but absurd and surreal story.”⁸ Even though the method has recently been employed in prior works such as the camel taxidermy in *Arabian Delight* (and details) 2008 Rexene suitcase, taxidermy camel, metal rods, wood, cotton wool, fabric 105 x 144 x 155 cm (open with lid)⁹ and the monkey taxidermy in *Double Salute*^x the emblematic and perennial water buffalo motif is particularly in this context the most earnest. Taxidermy stimulates notions of life and death, recycling and reuse of objects and of preservation and of resurrection. From a cultural point of view, Mulji has not felt restricted in her choice of imagery or art style. She belongs to the current generation who has facilitated access to art making and the art world environments from all over the globe via the instant cyber world. The pluralistic and experimental tendencies in art particularly, since the second half of the 20th century in the west, where artists have developed radical breaks with the traditional representational art has made its way into the Pakistan Art Arena. The influence of pluralistic and experimental tendencies specific to Pakistani art has developed radical breaks with traditional figurative in recent years and has not per se shaken the Art World however, its development has opened Pakistani artists to other options of expression. The choice is sometimes made randomly, sometimes used out of context and content from which specific (movements) styles and imageries have taken their roots and are, for their visual quality appealing to artists world wide. The *cyber world* has bridged the gap but not context and content in which art has developed. It is interesting to take installations and note that it takes its roots in the constructivist movement and Dada Art, the first being the work, *Proun Envir* in 1923. Installation Art came into prominence in the 70s. Installations are not new to the art scene in Pakistan but, the choice of medium she has made use of is fairly recent, dating 2008. The current tendencies in western and eastern art are accessible via virtual medium and the artists’ pluralistic and experimental trends have opened endless venues.

From a structural point of view, Mulji's work makes exciting use of motifs and objects and deft manipulation of the medium. Her choice of using taxidermy, which technically is a dead animal, unlike some other, works such that of Hirst Damien Hirst (1965) English artist example of using dead animals in his work, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* 1991 does not question art. Her concerns with physiological and psycho states put forth the impact of environmental and ecological issues in the fast-moving man-made world. There is no obvious attempt put through this work, per say, on behalf of the artist to question traditional representational art practiced in Pakistan as such, even though on a cultural level there is in Pakistan an ongoing debate which entails what is acceptable as contemporary art and what is traditional representational art in term of subject and medium. Mulji is the product of this mindset but at a level where the artist has reaped the fruits sowed earlier. She is a post-modern artist making the most of the pluralistic and experimental groups. It does not strike the theme of the *memento mori* latin phrase "remember that you have to die", which is an aesthetic cultivated around the mortality of man and of the soul after death. She has used the means of taxidermy to decisively represent motif in the surreal realm. In these works, the medium is not the subject, but the motif of the water buffalo in her surrounding is the subject.

The line and direction are the play of horizontal and vertical. The colours are naturalistic and life-like except for an artificial green seen in the concrete pipe around the head of the water buffalo in her *Suburban Dream* (Figure 3). The sculptural aspects define the space and the shape and forms both organic and natural are proportionate primarily because of the methods and techniques used. She has brought together the unnatural and distorted. Being a three-dimensional theatrical installation, Mulji has reconciled the symbolic aspects and the non-objective one by using familiar objects intermingling and warping their physical relationship with one another. A doubtful situation is composed of both evoking on the one hand real sensation through recognition of the object and stimulated impression of its disposition.

The installation using photomontage and sculpture, in this case, is not site-specific. The photomontage and the sculpted pieces can be viewed independently and hold ground. But they can be viewed as a composition that

is composed of various views of the same state. In relationship to one another, the autonomy of each piece justifies the compositional balance of various mediums. Mulji has an emphatic effect with the taxidermy water buffaloes over the photomontages because of their fidelity to reality. She has repeated the water buffalo motif, making it thematic to help with the solo exhibition. The contrast lies in her use of opposing rules of physics, such as that of weight and balance and contrasting and violating tight spaces with oversized shapes. Mulji shows the harmony of the horizontal and the vertical lines and she makes use of placing the elements in both pieces in improbable positions.

The demonstrative interpretation focus of this installation is on the theatrical nature of where and how the taxidermy water buffalo is found in the sculptural pieces and photomontages. Her presence among familiar landscapes and architectural elements has forced the taxidermy to adapt to odd, perplexing and challenging physical postures. It is demonstrative of environmental and ecological matters. It also demonstrates the relationships between nature and artificial objects. It is representative of their physical differences, and it demonstrates a play of opposing laws of physical plasticity. It demonstrates the harmony and concord in conflicting states. Mulji reminds us that the buffalo is a widely used motif that she has used practically and metaphorically. Animals, plants and human figures have been used as subjects to denote symbols of diverse cultures. They have been attributed connotations closely linked to their cultural patterns and heritage and many hold universal symbolic significances recognizable by large and sundry viewers. However, narrowing down at these motifs through cultural and ethnic lenses, motifs take on shapes, sizes and peculiarities distinct to their regions.

Mulji reminds us that the choice of the water buffalo is noteworthy for those qualities that denote its individuality, personality and specificity to her local audience. The artist's use of the motif's versatility successfully renders both indigenous and universal emblematic quality.

Theatrically placed, the motif finds itself in precarious and strange situations, create a surreal impact on the viewer. It creates a metaphor of survival instinct and how nature is in constant transition, conflict and turmoil up against

artificial contradictions and evokes the sense that somehow we have to find any way to survive. It is a metaphor for the tragic *condition humaine* that we have neither control over artificial objects nor nature. It's a metaphor for human inadequacies and his mad frenzy to dominate nature without considering the consequences that presently the most talked about subject in the world that of Global Warming and all its repercussions on life in general. It is a metaphor for human struggle against economic and societal inequalities and discrimination. The water buffalo, large, heavy and black, is a gentle animal that languidly moves along dreamily and unhurriedly is not a social beast and is lost without her herd. Her gentle eyes say it all. In order to feel good and healthy and to avoid dehydration, the water buffalo needs a waterhole to submerge her whole self except for her head. As a member of the food chain, she supplies us with milk, meat and her hide, which has been the source of Huma Mulji's success.

To evaluate this work, Mulji has previously used taxidermy camel and taxidermy monkey and the taxidermy water buffalo, all created by means of a highly effective technique that is a definite "attention grabber," according to Valerie Grove. However, the water buffalo has hit a chord that fits perfectly with this purport. This work expresses perspicacious lucidity in the cultural ideas and values held recognizable by the spectator, even though there may be those who may step back in confusion at the post-modernist, pluralistic art approach. The symbols created by the juxtaposing of the sculptural pieces within their compositional aspects communicate rather clearly the ecological/environmental concerns that are both expressed at micro and macro levels. The uses of the context in a dream-like, surreal setting give a presupposed reading into the protagonist's mind. The interpretation is a paradox; it is only appropriate to come across water buffaloes in a delirious state of affairs that one is in such a *compos mentis* or composed state of mind to appreciate her cause.

The primary schools of thought and aesthetics in Pakistan Art Arena in this purport: Postmodern and Traditionalist aesthetics. Interestingly the gap is filled by the "motif" - in the case of Ghulam Rasul's painting of the water buffalo. (It is the case for numerous Pakistani artists who take as feature this aesthetic element.) Here is the meeting point. Ghulam Rasul and Huma

Mulji. They are generations apart. Both artists have chosen the same aesthetic element as means of expression. The water buffalo is omnipresent in Pakistan and Asia rural landscapes, in the suburban and the urban jungle. This element used by veteran artist Ghulam Rasul (1942-2008) and by a more recent artist with nearly 15 years' experience, Huma Mulji (b. 1970), speaks out more than its apparent association with its rural background.

The medium used in Ghulam Rasul's representation of the water buffalo is oil on board, compared to Mulji's taxidermy water buffalo installation and Ghulam Rasul's medium is of a more traditional nature. However, the choice made by the artists is relative to the time they produced their respective works. Forty-two years separate both the artworks, in 1966 for his First One-Man Show exhibited at the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Punjab, Lahore, Ghulam Rasul painted "*Buffaloes in Green Fields*", and in March, 2008 Huma Mulji's installation 'High Rise' was exhibited at the National College of Arts, Lahore.

Lucidity in the Conclusion

Ghulam Rasul's work – not only the central piece studied – answers the definitions of aesthetics in context of the hedonistic and moral improvement. The variety in his work and the mastery he displays in his renderings put him amongst the greatest artists in Pakistan. While he is a source of aesthetic elements for some, and a model of technical mastery for any painter, he relies only on himself and his passion for art expression. He never crosses the limits of the milieu demarcation pillars.

Other generations may be compelled by pressing issues displayed in the media. Eyes wide on all kinds of art expression, crossing all cultural barriers, battle with another kind of jungle and another degree of technological sophistication. These general considerations go far beyond the sphere of the art world – they are part of the general conclusion of this research.

Things to change buffaloes stay! We have used the buffalo motif as to bridge the gap between artists and to see the relationship of these motifs as an aesthetic choice. A list of motifs was derived from the view of several works of Pakistani artists that seem to be an aesthetic derived from its own art history.

The monograph undertaken, with the details they contain, have, through the analytical endeavor attempted to focus on relevant cases and carry the analysis till its logical end or to some explanatory extrapolations.

General considerations regarding most disciplines such as history, social sciences, ethnography, anthropology, philosophy, and, history of art also, demonstrate the necessity to overlap and draw from each other's wisdoms and methods. Recently, physiology, biology, brain sciences and other sciences join in the creativity; eye sciences demonstrate the mechanisms the image operates. Imagery manuals are developed, they are available; "one knows how to create a perfect image" which can have a planned specific effect. But would this be art? And, if so, then why not? But then that requires another discussion.

What is the place of the artist in the world? The question is returned to the world itself. The world of today is in constant evolution: virtually nothing is permanent or stable. The universe is known to expand. Sciences identify the smaller and smaller, and the works on genesis represent an immense potential into the knowledge of man - Is this a whole or a multitude of very small concerns which should prevail?

While one cannot ignore the changes in the world one is also confronted with the multitude of the contradictions and of the paradoxes. Some populations are younger but the life expectancy is climbing up. Food is produced in abundance, misused so that millions of humans are hungry. Logistics can solve any travel or transport problems but policies – it be visas or economic circles- antagonize the sector. Information technologies offer access to each individual to information of all kinds; the infrastructure of this is not available everywhere, the costs are too high for many, and conversely the individual is losing freedom as he/she becomes a retraceable item everywhere. Procedures of all sorts can be simplified but they require trained users to operate and induce fracture, isolations of the less knowledgeable or the less equipped and empowering of the specialist. The realm of the specialist, in turn, calls for the isolated individual. The ever-present media, though, bombard the individual to the point of saturation while the contrary, operates and many individuals become dependent on the Internet, computers and television, one as a technological dependency and the other for its information accessibility.

The reoccurring cycle from generation to generation with its differences prompts a relation of dynamic and tension, putting forth points of view and schools of thought allowing fresher ideas and more recent methods to counter the institutionalized previously fresher views and newer methods. Meanwhile, recurrent phenomena can be observed in the world and the art world.

The artist as an individual in society, may be confronted by the notion of isolation or feeling lonely in the realization of his incapacity and insignificance considering his relation to the universe. The artist is engaged with a significant number of creative options and a substantial number of issues to address. The artist, though is “equipped” like never before and nonetheless aware of his nano-like place in the universe. This goes for most artists of the contemporary world as those of Pakistan. The artist is enabled to be an artist of the world addressing the world.

One could disagree with the latter statement, but the words in this present article allow to observe that the numerous Pakistani artists since, and before, 1947, have studied and visited the West. They have not been alien to art and art movements consciously or subconsciously. There is an *interval* between the time of culmination, assimilation and synthesis, but this is not only subjective to the Pakistani artist. It is a phenomenon present anywhere; Modern Art was nearly a century old when it came to Pakistan, if we take 1865 as the beginning of Modern Art with the exhibition of the *Olympia* of Manet and if we take World War II as the starting point of Contemporary Art and Post-Modernism. Moreover, Pakistan society is knowledgeable and keen regarding technological progress, which in the last century has been domineering. Western - electricity, cinema, automobile, television, computers and other technologies etc. The applications may not be available to all or everywhere at the same time, but eventually, that disparity too disappears. What is new now is that access to information is instantaneous; it enables the individual and therefore the artist to become operational as they may choose or be guided.

The West influence – as it appears in the Art domain is dominant. That includes the art repertory, the art vocabulary, the art technologies and the art “patterns or movements” The Pakistani artist, not a slave to the western art dictates, executes his own original synthesis. The expressions constructed have

their personalities and an acutely developed aesthetic. One is not in the presence of plagiarists but in the presence of determined decisions. The *influences*, which appear as plagiaristic or copyist for one, is an act of understanding and learning more about particular interpretations – technique, treatment, etc. It allows also the culmination, assimilation and synthesis of new aesthetics.

It is not derogatory that the Western influence is domineering in sense of subjects, themes, treatments, manners, but it is a reality. One explanation could be that the same way heightened technological developments are standard bearers for societies around the globe, art development which, in this case, appear as Modern Art and Contemporary Art are protagonists. Being a branch of society Art reflects the intellectual and technological standing.

Looking back in history, taking into consideration the strings of events that effected Pakistan, post-colonialism, partition, secession, the influx of Afghan refugees, series of chaotic political setups, being in the presence of traumatic situations have had its effect on the Pakistan Art Arena in several ways by creating a vacuum in the development of art institutions or by opening new avenues to censorship for instance. However, these are circumstantial hindrances, regardless of which the artist has continued to search and produce art, in some cases, through modes of expressions using a perfectly palatable and politically correct manner to hint, indicate or insinuate shocking items. The question of democratization of art is an element in agitation both around the art world and in Pakistan naturally, too. Accessibility to artworks has increased with the ongoing technological development. important to mention, again, in terms of a statistical evaluation shows clearly why and how the western world is the motor in the world – for the time being! The museums, the galleries, the art fairs and the art market and its marketing are all largely under the control of Europe and the United States of America. If one only looks at the art schools in Europe, one finds one art graduate school for one million persons in comparison to the proportion in Pakistan, the ratio falls to one for ten million. Although this is not the subject of this article, it is nonetheless a manner to understand the sense and the development of art in Pakistan. However, these examples have one element in common that both these societies produce artists; art and intellectual life are motors of a society.

As for the sources of influences, it is incontestable that the aesthetic element *spillover* that opened Pakistan to Modern Art came from Western Art and more from Impressionism. Subsequently, a more pluralistic and Post-Modern Art has developed over time and consequently, always with one eye on Western Art World. It came in via Out-Door painting, Expressionism, Cubism and Abstract movements. We have seen that the Western Art spillovers occurred through travelers, locals who traveled and may have studied in Europe – France, England, Italy, Spain, Russia, and Czechoslovakia, amongst other places, and later on, in the United States and the influences from the Far East has had its gentle presence via Japan and China. The influences came through printed matter, in moderation. It came into artists' works regardless, whether the artist had traveled or not, and with the ongoing technological and scientific development the accessibility and the availability to a *Global Art*, it has exploded with the cyber world. There was also an influx through the educational systems – directly and indirectly, as a relevant number of painters are in the education world too.

The desire of artists to look onto and into their roots from the indigenous art sourced from an extensive repertoire of miniature paintings; Pahari, Plains, Rajput, Pala, Jain, etc and the historical evidence of epochs of grandeur – the Mughul Painting, Architecture and Gardens. Later, the ancient Indus Valley Civilization and other historical sights- Chawkandi Tombs, Taxila etc constituted an appeal for the artists. Likewise the aesthetic element spillover of capturing scenes of old urban centers – the cityscapes –the rural landscapes – and the world in between these “*scapes*”. Meanwhile, the revival of Miniature Arts has not only produced art with worldwide recognition, but also has developed an art synthesized with elements of Conceptualism. Installations, the same way other forms of art enumerated earlier, have synthesized the aesthetics, specifically indigenous oriented. The same goes for photography and Video Art etc.

The history of Pakistan and the lands of Pakistan hold its answers. One can look at this as a succession of numerous layers or tiers that compromise the variegated elements that make up a society. One can consider that the land is the first tier that bears fruit to rich cultural and traditional patterns – in form of languages, rituals and ethnicity and religion. The second tier is host to all

the variegated invasions and rules- notably the Mughul Empire (1527- 1858) and the British Rule till 1947, keeping in mind the overlaps. And the third tier is the ongoing influences from all areas due to irrefutable existence in which we also find synthesized from all three tiers. These tiers are accessible simultaneously and at will. The Pakistani artist hence is aware of his existence in similitude and can waltz at will in and out, plucking what is needed and desired at a given moment. This produces a diversity of kinds of synthesis on the picture plane, stimulated by the artist's contact with images, occurring consciously and subconsciously.

Inevitable influences are from innumerable sources, which demonstrate the variegated treatments on the picture plane that also includes a more pluralistic practice of art methods, materials and treatments. Influences likewise derived from the patterns that makeup the society in which he belongs. Aesthetic effects derived from the secondary society the artist may acquire through their exposure and encounters that we could understand as the subjective view of the artist and their art. Influences derived from the shrinking world, growing art market and its supply and demand. It puts evidence to that artist use influences and synthesis new aesthetics.

The *influences* are an essential ingredient for the synthesis, which could be explained as the artist's personal, independent and individual imprint meshed into his influences and personal philosophical, psychological and spiritual concerns for circumstantial reasons and the rich history that cannot be delved into here.

As one moves on to more general terms, regarding aesthetic element *influences* in Pakistan Art Arena, one has to observe that this phenomenon is not due to hazard. Pakistan is not an isolated country. There is and always has been, a movement of persons in and out of Pakistan. Its existence in the world is essential and fundamental. Besides the reason for its creation in the first place, Pakistan is based on rich and diverse cultural patterns, languages, traditions, geophysical characteristics, climatic differences and more. It carries with it the features of post-colonialism, the scars of a new nation with a partition and a post-partition, secession, and millions of refugees. Art, as an integral part of society, holds its indigenous trend. All cultures breathe thanks

to their crafts – lung and reflection. Further on, Pakistan’s complex multifaceted culture holds a multifaceted complex art – its respiration.

The nature of influences of aesthetic elements, in essence, has to follow a pluralistic pattern in order to be reliable since one is facing a multiplication effect of the facets. It is well suited to the Pakistani artist used to fare in a very complex environment and used to find their individualistic path – also the specific path of modern and contemporary art in general. There is a European and American dominance in the world of art. It acts in Pakistan as an axis on which various aspects of art production are connected.

Painting and sculpture, are easily observable art expressions that can be seen as means of documentation, decoration etc, with functionality and purpose to better understanding art history through various interpretations. The syntheses they trigger here do not fail the four pillars generally accepted to characterize aesthetics i.e, hedonistic, moral improvement, catharsis, and truth which seem to remain primordial throughout artistic endeavors.

Images are visual cultural evidences; they may appear from anywhere and everywhere. Pakistan’s art world, as indeed the art all over the world, is now easily a recipient of these influences and operates through its characteristics with the plural attributes and the specific ability to work, which seems always to be a synthesis of many elements mentioned.

Time is usually the motor of development; this natural phenomenon applies to art. Artworks exist as a separate discipline, because it is a branch of society, it evolves in the wake of other sectors. Technology places all kinds of works on accessible forums on the net, which in turn can find their way into the brain of the artist or the onlooker. Time is irreversible, nothing is ever identical from instant to instant; once an image, an idea or a notion is seen or understood, the process of spillover is inevitable - consciously or not. In this evolution, the characteristic of Pakistan art aesthetics retains its own into modern artistic expression.

Influences work via “multi-versal”, multifaceted, multidimensional paths. It is not linear; it can take any form and number of dimensions or shapes, planes, or any mix of the same, in a manner to study art in that it is an attempt to understand further the concerns of the artist and the work produced as part of the cultural, social, political or historical aspects.

As it is inevitable that development of any sort, it be energy, culture (as is art) is going to spill over, even if it may appear as a vulgarization and democratization of visuals in the form of *influences*. The real reason of this development is that it corresponds to artistic development, which works on several planes simultaneously – intellectual approaches, philosophy, and psychology, after the contact that one discipline or branch of society has with one another, such as art, social and political arenas.

Art may traditionally be classified and divided and further subdivided, it may have its complex vocabulary and dictionary; these, however only represent tools to operate this discipline. However, the development of art understood as a development in a field or a discipline connected with the growth of cultural patterns, will eventually spread from the point of origin. The contact with aesthetic influences will, in space and time, create new syntheses via visual contact.

In this article, one can see that in the arts, Modern Art, Impressionism and their further paths represent an advanced development. This constituted a point of origin for complex developments that involved intellectual, philosophical, scientific and spiritual involvements, amongst others. Eventually, they did find their way around the world. Modern Art's eventual spread and influences correspond, at some point to the spirit in Pakistan, probably because, other than local and subjective development, there is the development of human beings in art which happens on another plane not defined by boundaries of geo-political nature.

As the Gauss- bell curves go, the artist finds him or herself on one of the extreme sides, aware often well ahead of time of the changes and variations, like a sixth sense. If one also considers that there is the development of the human being that occurs on the network in space and time, communicating allows the global subliminal level human beings to function simultaneously in various realms. One should, therefore, not be surprised to see an idea become a work of art when the time has come.

Looking now at the development of art derived from Pakistan's indigenous visual art, in the light of its history, one does find inspiration in circumstantial historical events. One observes the presence there of those visionaries who could see what the modern art had to offer. The visual

expression is of juxtaposition in terms of techniques, images, time notions ideas are alive in the present. It deals with opposite tensions and balances between chaos and order. One must also consider what derives from all kinds of sources, be it spiritual, religious, languages, beliefs, taboos, dogmas, or constraints. The pluralistic approach and concerns allow all permutations and expressions of visual culture and word. It does not take over the art, which adheres to what we have seen as traditional visuals. The artist, nonetheless, is free to his/her individuality and free to understand art in terms of what defines this discipline without necessitating him to spillover to post-modern and contemporary concerns

Throughout history and human sciences (climatic, geographic, biological, historical, socio-economic), all principle of existence is to move forward. One cannot move back, even in the presence of opposites; light against dark, obscure areas, for instance. Contradiction allows the human intellectual inner self and heart to move forward. Circumstantial historical events are not the only explanations to force one into a reverse mode or to completely rationalize the future. The necessity of being present is the key.

One could say that the artist, being an individual of a society, can make choices and develop his art, as he wants. The *influences* are a manner of relating the development and the movement of art which recognizes no political boundaries and puts in evidence the role of an artist, recipient and lucid. The artist can express the same concerns as his contemporary environment, local or international. His individuality and his art can spill over into other fields and branches of society. Studying the artists and further understanding his work as both an individual and as a common factor of society. In all cases, the artist and his work could be beneficial as it could help constructive understanding. The development of art in community holds its functionality because of the priceless information of the human mind and intellect and its beneficial effects. Wading through multiple concerns and aspects of life. we can only declare art as an avenue to channel different perceptions and conflicting ideas, usually in forms of variegated languages and cultures.

Today we have the contemporary art scene, which is an entity at a global scale: monetary, market, sales much like a stock exchange, a system, an

institution, a platform for artists worldwide who in a way adhere to that aesthetic, the aesthetic element *influences* of contemporary concerns. And like all things, it calls for its other half to counter and create a healthy dynamism—much like the concept of Ying Yang. To create art via contemporary existential systems or simply to create as “Outsiders” whether pluralistic in concerns or based entirely on the “sake of doing art” or to create Art via bandwagons or applying a utopist approach to art, based on dreams, or a presentation of ideal beauty that should be respected as a possible choice. Art is a part of the society as one organ, one limb of society, a function, and a lung. Whether one appears a “bandwagon art” or a “utopist art” be it, that it is based on search and research of ideal beauty or ideals, technical knowledge or on one that appears as an interpretation and display of juxtaposition realities; today the world as we know it is shrinking and the differences accentuated and apparent— the sheer array of choice should not be forsaken and fall into bigotry and narrow-mindedness biased reflections and thought motors susceptible to manipulation. It would appear that an artist can possess the ability and is such that he will find his way through imaginative alternate paths, even when everything for that time has conformed with institutions within themselves. Broadening the term ‘engage’/: the reflective artist, the art, the art for the sake of art, the artist engaged to activate through his work a dimension above truth, the hedonistic concerns, moral improvement and catharsis. As Art has moved towards pluralistic-ism, can it be then possible that artwork and research enable a communion and helps to bridge the gap. The diversity in terms of potential communication and constructive dialogue without falling into a uniformity but allowing the variety in the aesthetics plane to lean towards a universality that allows enough space for the ‘I do art, and I do not communicate for any purpose whatsoever’ scenario. Could it be that the artist who adhered to a pluralistic expression which, may include strong viewpoints on political, societal global issues etc... finds himself at a crossroads where he could opt to be a vehicle and a bridge of global diversity, which has to be seen. Could his pluralistic concerns influence into becoming an artist ‘engage’ by broadening the term ‘engage’/: the reflective artist, the art for the sake of art, the artist engaged to activate through his work a

dimension above truth, hedonistic concerns, moral improvement and catharsis.

The inevitable influences have found the natural course of development interpretations. Subsequently, the spill of post-modern and contemporary is typical and is of essence. The pluralistic understanding of various disciplines and fields is again a natural cause of development in Pakistan's Art Arena and aesthetics. The turn towards the historical indigenous art history discourse and fields is inevitable. It is the positive encounter: the principle of tension between two opposites' action and reaction, mastery of time, the appeal of a dead language, leading to juxtapositions. It is a healthy situation in Pakistan moves and transforms itself.

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