

## Postmodern Conceptual approach in Contemporary Art of Pakistan

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### Abstract

*This study observes transitions from semi democratic art to expression of none objective, and use of technology that brought an infinite sphere of art in Pakistan. Popular art movement assimilates truck art, cinema hoardings and wedding motifs in the cities and urban areas. Artists explored freely electronic media, digital art forms, photography and film to communicate expressions in individual ways. Kind of depiction engaged in concept oriented artworks due to all prescribed reasons is most remarkable. Artists freely combining modern ethnicity with tradition, continued to expand the potential discovered by preceding generation and kept on insert additional dimensions. Artists rejected conventional artistic media. For the reason, artistic development inclines into intellectual investigation and manifestation despite beauty and aesthetic pleasure. It is believed that distinctiveness of art works is in idea and contemporary artist are remarkably contributing to this theory.*

**Keywords:** Conceptual art, idea, immeasurable, infinite sphere of art, fusion.

### Introduction

The values of art deals with an extensive range of exploratory issues occur from an extensive assortment of objects of consideration. Artistic concerns vary from prehistoric cave painting to conceptual poetry, and from the trouble of how music can communicate sensation to that of the unseen category of imaginary characters.

In the psyche of human being commitment to freedom of thoughts and expression is intensely rooted. Freedom of expression demands Freedom of expression for others and it is mandatory of democracy. In a democratic country like Pakistan, despite the fact, art expression has always been bound to the socio political restriction. Artist is still string-ridden due to the policies applied by the establishment. In Pakistan artistic language and creations come under fastidious attacks because they convey explicitly and communicate symbolic ideals in a very strong way that can be measured. Incentive for restrictions on Pakistani Art stems from Socio-political, moral and religious, cultural and economic concerns. This disturb freedom of artistic expression, so, art sometimes underwent many modifications rather survive pure.

Until lately, nonetheless, philosophical awareness in conceptual art, or conceptualism, has been particularly insufficient. Countless kinds and styles of art works that fall in the conceptual practice have one thing in universal. The focus is to make you consider and ask critical inquiries. These inquiries start from investigation, what

conceptual understanding of artist is in making an art piece and how it further leads to investigate existing philosophy behind his conceptual works. To investigate this one needs to know existing trends in art, situations and circumstances of the artist he lives in, role and limitations of art and artistic mediums involved in contemporary expressions, ideas and concepts and their semantic representations in artistic visuals.

To develop some initiative of dialogue about conceptual understanding in contemporary Pakistani art, it is pertinent to know the socio-religious and political situation of the country after partition in 1947. All those circumstances had a strong impact on the artist and their creations during foundation years. Later, artists' investigations about what new ideas or concepts and explorations of new medium of expression lead the artist to post conceptual phenomena. Intellectual role of the artist and responsibility of conveying contemporary messages to Pakistani society proves that concepts and notions opted by various artists are of great value and contributing in the social and political scenario worldwide. Their forcefully applied artistic connotation, narrations and demonstrations play active role to express and convey their message through various expressions of fine arts.

### Distress of Political upheavals in Pakistani Art after partition

Artists are not only moved by beauty always, rather some deep catharsis or issues of time motivate them to

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express. They work on a different wavelength challenging the injustice, bitter realities, and religious repressions, political or social imbalances. Artistic expression forcefully can debate issues and bring them forth for a wider view. Democracy demand freedom of expression, but in Pakistan art is still bound to some restrictions applied by the government. Though freedom of thought is deeply rooted in the psyche of human to express and record.

In Pakistan first twenty five years after partition was a time when women lead the way and broadened the way to approach art education and creative activities. In recently established state of Pakistan, art education was barely notable from crafts and the standing of painting in public sphere was not determined. In University of the Punjab, focus of vice chancellor was just to articulate the subtle statement on the goal of fine art in the field of teaching and in 1940 when the Department was reserved exclusively for women, aim was just to train women to be artistic not artists.<sup>[1]</sup> With the passage of time pursuit of art freedom became a powerful source for communication for public. This transition paved the way for personal and Cultural Revolution. Women in the field of art education laid the foundation after partition as teachers in schools, colleges and universities but very few appeared as practitioners and discourse in art set with male artists like Chughtai, Allah Bakhsh, Zain ul Abedin or rising modernists like Shakir Ali. Overriding Colonial academic practice remained in art curriculum in Punjab University with influences from institutes like Shantiniketan and Calcutta school and was practiced into art classes via Anna Molka Ahmed and Chughtai. Their focus was to make the teaching of art more 'Pakistani'. Few contents like Bengali 'wash painting' technique occasionally demonstrated however most contents remained at theoretical level in art history and the teaching of painting continued restricted to western genres of landscape, still life, portraiture following western manners.<sup>[2]</sup>

Artists expressed their concerns through new possibilities in concept and mediums somewhat differently than practice of classrooms. Artists from Lahore such as A. J. Shamza, Ahmed Pervaiz, and Moyene Najmi passionately questioned issues about analyzing and comparing forms and styles. Their paintings are echoing cubist models of the global style. Women were excluded from this discourse as practitioners than art teachers in the field of art. Teaching came to be viewed as a less important task, escalating the idea of artists as male trail blazers. Therefore, the word 'artist' was barely unbiased of gender. Zubaida Agha opposed the label 'woman Artist'. The known artists of the 50s and 60s, Shamza, Ahmed Pervaiz, Murtaza Bashir and Sadquain- were incomparable in their life styles. They strengthened in the style and belief which linked artistic creation with no regard for conventional rules of *art*.<sup>[3]</sup> Zubaida Agha's early experimentation with Abstraction and Shakir Ali's work's that gave roots to cubism in the 50's were all contributory to establish a philosophy of modern art in Pakistan.<sup>[4]</sup>

Art represent an important medium for each person in a society to extend and articulate their compassion, and meanings owed to their way of life and development. In all societies people generate or make use of artistic expressions and creations. A strong association between the arts and politics, predominantly between an assortment of kinds of art and power, happens transversely in historical epochs and cultures. As they react to contemporary happenings and politics, the arts owns political as well as communal dimensions, becoming a focus of argument and even a power of political as well as social change.

Military coup of 1977 and later Peoples Party Government brought tremendous changes that artists faced. During People's Party public and private art benefaction guaranteed the social competence of artists as valued and commendable members of the society. Post 1977 military regime brought more restraint. Literature and mass media an expression for edifying communication was cautiously monitored by the government. The electronic media were suppressed severely, and suitable codes of dress, behaviour and language were made obligatory. In fine arts problems raised, though, figurative painting and sculpture was not prohibited. Government engaged images of political power as of the President sometimes as 'Father of the nation'. Calligraphy and landscape was a significant expression in art for certain political reasons. Combination of both evoked sense of national pride and Islamic identity.<sup>[5]</sup>

Pakistani artists also contributed to communal debates, sometimes bringing potential counterweights to existing authorities and centres and also entertained people through displaying their works of art in galleries. They decided on strength of artistic creativity which was necessary for the growth of energetic cultures and the functioning of democratic societies.

After partition in Pakistan artistic expressions and creations in cultural life demanded reason, meanings and revisiting culturally inherited ideas and concepts. The critical mission of execution of human rights was to check the subjective freedom of various perspectives on behalf of their authority and institutional or power of trade and industry in culture. This standard rose in every fundamental issue raised in the debates on the right of freedom of artistic expression.

Subjects addressing issues of nudity and politics in art and media has always been the most frequent aim of expurgation in east as well as in west. Many examples come to mind as in west a Venus de Milo painting of a classical statue was removed from a store because the manager found it semi-nude. Maya Angelou's many works of literature were banned in schools due to sexual substance and there are several more such examples. This censorship movement has always been active and strict in the democratic Islamic state of Pakistan and many works were kept restricted from the eyes of viewers.

Colin David was inclined towards exploring human figures and nudes in spite of most unfavourable

circumstances with masterly linear balance and skilful handling of colours.<sup>[6]</sup>

Holding National exhibitions in Lahore and Islamabad were important signifier that faced procedure of censorship in art. Art works of Jamil Naqsh, Salima Hashmi and Jamila Masood were removed right before exhibition. Female nudes by Naqsh were not accepted on the basis of social ethics and political contents were behind the rejection of two female artists.<sup>[7]</sup>

After 1977, women artists rose in numbers and what subject matters female artists are painting was major concern. Female artists did not choose to change their original vision like many of their male colleagues. They kept intuitively disengaged themselves from prevailing ideology of time and challenged at many levels retrieval meanings. They also challenged suppositions being proposed regarding national art, traditional art, and art identity. This energy and resistance is prominently expressed by Nahid Raza, Qudsia Nisar, Mehr Afroz in their artworks.<sup>[8]</sup>

First quarter of twentieth century provide the remarkable artistic contribution of the artists like Anna Molka Ahmed (1917-1995), Abbasi Akhter Abidi (b.1930), Nasim Hafeez Qazi (1931-1995), Zubaida Aga (1922-1997) and we see a strong role of these females in art education establishing art departments in schools, colleges and universities. Anna Molka recorded communal and political chaos of partition, religious events, and festivals, floods, and theme of Heaven and Hell and Purgatory. Often selecting an assortment of concepts she wanted to share what she was unable to exhibit due to policies of regime. (plate.1)



**Plate.1** *Flood* by Anna Molka Ahmed.

Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 15.

Abbasi Akhter Abidi after completing her studies from Punjab University under her mentor Anna Molka took up

Principal Mark Sponenberg's offer to teach in National College of Arts. She represented first National art exhibition in Dhaka of teachers from various political, social and religious backgrounds in an atmosphere of growing state interference in academics. Vigilance by militants of *Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba* to pursue special brand of religious fundamentalism being supported by army rule made her years string-ridden and complicated but she remained unyielding against and conducted criminal proceedings. First time in Pakistan an art institution accomplish a status of independence from *Jamiat* students.<sup>[9]</sup>

Various mediums of expressions were evolved in curricula and art expression widened. Many female artists practiced water based mediums as well as printmaking and reclamation of the tradition of miniature painting also took place in the eighties.<sup>[10]</sup> Investigating conceptual understanding in Pakistani art is not possible without looking at the efforts and contributions of Great Masters such as Ustaad Allah Bakhsh (1895-1978), *Abdur Rahman Chughtai* (1897-1975), Zain ul Abedin (1914 - 1976), Ali Imam (1924-2000) and modernists like Shakir Ali (1914-1975) later remarkable contribution by Anna Molka Ahmed, Khalid Iqbal, Nasim Hafeez Qazi, Abbasi Akhter Abidi, Colin David, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Jamila Zaidi, Zubaida Agha provided a strong foundation to the art and art education in Pakistan.

### Postmodern Conceptual approach in Contemporary Art of Pakistan

Artists always wished to communicate their views of existing world around them using visual mediums. Some artists associated their works to past movements in art and conceptual ideas. The universal goal of each artist in the modern era is to move forward with their observation to a point of unpolluted originality. Some artists gained recognition of independent thinkers speculating beyond what represent acceptable forms of art which were approved by traditional government academies and set patrons of the visual arts. Artists depicted concepts that many measured vulgar, controversial, and sometimes absolute ugly.

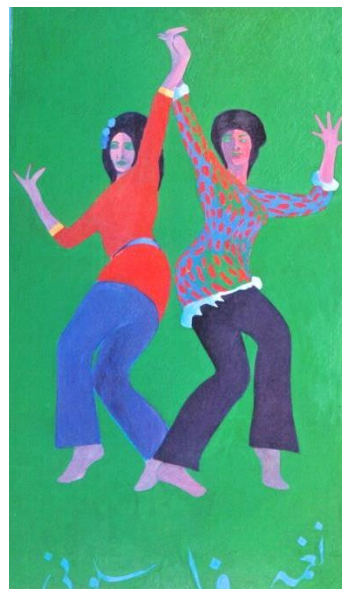
Sometimes it is important to comprehend Concepts in art works in a sequence of avant-garde movements such as Cubism, Abstract Expressionism and many more that thrived while expanding the possibilities in art expressions. Conceptualists put themselves at the farthest end of this avant-garde tradition. It is inappropriate whether this extremely conceptual art matches others personal views questioning what art should be. Though, the fact remains that artists doing conceptual art productively redefine the concept of a work of art so that their concepts are extensively accepted as art.

Pakistan's first generation of artists illustrated the initial disarray after partition that also proved as a new foundation when many painters arrived from various



corners of the subcontinent. Postcolonial chaos, the splitting of old links, and penetration of new ideas were the reasons that set the vista for art activities in the early days of the country. Post modernism artistic expression began from worldwide questioning of previous standards, and artists discovered altered theories and the influence on art disciplines. Young and confident artists looked for new ways to communicate their thoughts and concepts with new expression and language without shortcoming of the past.<sup>[11]</sup> Shakir Ali who was an appointed principal of National College of Arts was looking for talent and modern vision to inject in the institute persuaded Ijazul Hassan who returned back to Pakistan after completing his studies from England in 1965.<sup>[12]</sup>

Ijazul Hassan (b.23<sup>rd</sup> November 1938) practiced artistic innovation and depiction in every potential way. He was enthusiastic to change the somewhat patronizing cliché art according to which there is classification of conceptual art. In contemporary art of Pakistan, with more intense description of the argument is that are there as many descriptions of conceptual art as there are conceptual artworks. Ijaz, known as a political activist and artist left a tradition in National College of Arts that continued to inspire several generations of students and artists. He initiated to make students and artist realize the openness towards living issues and bitter truths. He was the sole challenger of the time and received much criticism on his works from the people who supported theories of formalist art. Ijaz gave an unavoidable twist to the ideals of Modernism in Pakistan. He added new dimensions to his works by taking a big step further to capture aesthetics by observing and absorbing the popular imagery of the time in posters pasted on the walls of cities, media images from news paper and magazine clippings, and cinema hoardings. He strongly employed familiar subjects from pop images for his purpose, as he was much inspired by the dramatic power of advertisement hoardings.<sup>[13]</sup> (plate.2) From popular images to metamorphic narratives Ijaz experienced various styles and strongly expressed the political turmoil with which he as an activist artist was affected. His painting 'New year bouquet', 1981 came out at the beginning of New Year during the heyday of Zia ul Haq martial law. (Plate.3) A barbed wire bouquet a gift to people of Pakistan represents metaphoric narrative for the restrictions and impositions put by government during martial law. Many of Hassan's paintings are views from windows. 'View through Window' is general title of the paintings that are also identified as *paiwasta reh shajr se, umid e bahar rukh*. Though this series developed during his imprisonment in *Naukhar* but strengthened during his solitary confinement at the Lahore Fort on the imposition of Martial Law by Zia ul Haq. Trees through window are symbol of hope.<sup>[14]</sup> (Plate.4) Numerous artists frequently shared feelings of repression under such political circumstance.



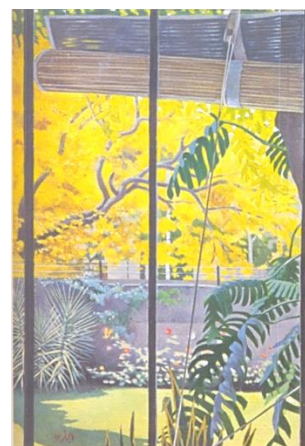
**Plate.2** *The Dancers*, Ijazul Hassan, 1971.

Source: Hassan, Ijazul Hassan, *Five Decades of Painting*, 70



**Plate.3** *New Year Bouquet*, Ijazul Hassan, 1981.

Source: Hassan, Ijazul Hassan, *Five Decades of Painting*, 98.



**Plate.4** *Autumn*, Ijazul Hassan, 1982.

Source: Hassan, Ijazul Hassan, *Five Decades of Painting*, 111.

Decisive efforts as well as commitment to art by devoted artists have been an important factor in inspiring the growth of art in Pakistan.<sup>[15]</sup> In Pakistan though there were efforts to banned red-light areas in 1950s and 60s. Unlike India, forbearance was not a preference. In the times of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the early 1970s the communities from red-light areas were benefited a breathing space with some degree of police protection nevertheless Zia ul Haq's time (1977-1988) there was an attempt to Islamise the country and therefore prostitution was seen as an evil practice. The government approach was to eradicate it by harassing sex workers and clients. Zia's policies continued to plague women in sex work in Pakistan, partly because the feminist never focused before on the rights of sex workers even though the ill effect of the *Haddood* Ordinance were felt equally by sex workers and common women working in the professional fields outside the sex trade.<sup>[16]</sup>

Iqbal Hussain, living in red-light area of Lahore since his childhood boldly kept on sharing hard realities of the condition of sex workers and brought forth the religious extremism and neglect of human rights through his paintings. He very devotedly kept on documenting the effects of *Haddood* ordinance on the females and pin pointed issues of the religious extremism in the country. (plate.5)



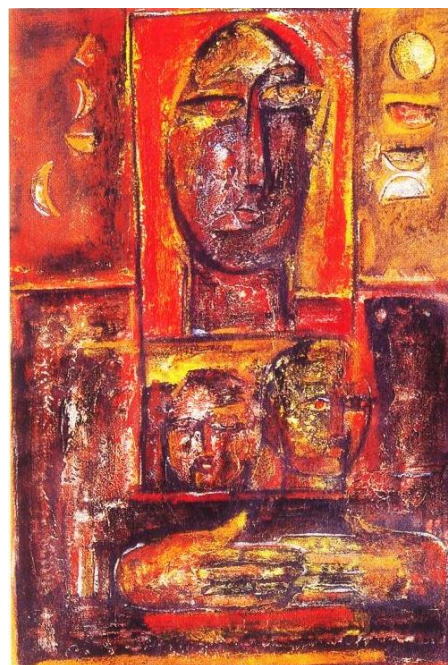
**Plate.5** *Untitled*, Iqbal Hussain, 1992.

Source: Hashmi, and Mirza. *50 Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan*. 81.

Satirically, this decade of intense political and social tyranny established a reaction in the work of women artists who not only refused to obey the orders of the state, but also appeared as noteworthy artist voices of their time.<sup>[17]</sup> These female artists not only reacted to the restrictions of system but with great potential represented social and political pressure on culture and people. Rabia Zuberi, Nahid Raza, Nazish Ata Ullah, Qudsia Nisar, Mehr Afroz are prominent names.

Nahid Raza found an expression of growing themes about women. Her personal struggle merged with the struggle of females in Zia's regime. She expressed in an

explicit form of reply and revolt. She selected symbols from Egyptian and Indian mythology that answered her need of concepts. Mediums like oil painting, printmaking and acrylics gave a zest to her work and she depicted forcefully in all these mediums. Her art works are a source to express her own struggle as well as struggle of females under sever socio political circumstances. Her painting 'Code of Silence' is a documentation of new legislation endorsed by Zia ul Haq.<sup>[18]</sup> (Plate.6)



**Plate.6** *Code of Silence*, Nahid Raza, 1981.

Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 89.

In view of the fact that during early 20th century, globally, some artists refused admittance or acceptance of realistic depiction and the representation of the human figure, and moved gradually more towards abstraction. Contemporary artists also acknowledge and found stimulation in art works from former times in both styles under dialogue and formal elements.

Towards abstraction or semi abstraction most famous and iconic example are the art works of Dr Shahida Manzoor who expresses her philosophical desirability to nature and gets hold of stimulation from its vibrant assortment of colour and form. All her paintings are emblematic demonstration of nature. Abstract in style, adopting the intrinsic worth of Synchronism, her colour-field canvases portray rhythmic color forms with proceeding and dropping hues. In the maze of dynamic abstract brush strokes, she conveys dramatic connotation of the exquisiteness of natural world of tranquillity.<sup>[19]</sup> (plate.7)

In 60s, internationally artists initiated to pursue the medium of installations and video to reformulate fine art. Through video and installation art, numerous artists challenged inflexible philosophy of art.





**Plate.7** *Union*, Shahida Manzoor, 2014.

Source: Catalogue, *Anhad Naad*, Solo Exhibition by Shahida Mnazoor at Hamail Art Gallery.

Video projections and installation in art is fundamentally not such a category of art that artists would wish to possess, but rather carry on like an experience. Enduring the tendency of reformulating previous ideas and ideals about art, existing video artists are seeking to go beyond the traditional concept of art as an article of trade. Artists following video to express used the art form as an instrument to bring a change as standard for new ideas. Such artists initiated to lift the practice of creating art and moved further to the concept that art should meant only to be appreciated as an aesthetically enjoyable creation. In Pakistan during 60's artists initiated a new expression of non-objective art in which the subject became the process of the painting. Texture, colour combination and space were the artists' concerns by go beyond the subject. The sphere of art was infinite by declaring a wider response yet in the best works spirit of the artists' roots remained.<sup>[20]</sup> The women artist of the late 70s and 80s managed documenting concepts like matrimony, paternity, careers, and art production was speedy though the political and social climate in country was increasingly aggressive. Moving away from apparently representational imagery, women were enthusiastically and boldly bringing forth ideas from various sources.<sup>[21]</sup> Latter half of the 60s provided many opportunities to artists and designers. Advertising agencies established in the country and competed for clients who were in demand of original designs and campaigns. Television stations needed creative artists and designers, and for the first time pioneering art professionals were in command. Artists studying in foreign countries returned from abroad

incorporated the techniques of contemporary art from the west. Some made carriers contributing to the field of design as professionals and Women artists began to come forward as a strapping power. Now, there are number of privately run art galleries in Karachi and Lahore, but still country's art is in short of museums of modern arts.<sup>[22]</sup>

Politically much stable situation in the country provided opportunity to the artist to work freely and many artists got inclined toward conceptual art. In a much liberated atmosphere of country artists started expressing conceptual works when ideas and new concepts were welcomed and there were number of forums to support new developments in the field of fine arts. Hardly any movements of artists have fascinated much disagreement, opinion and disputes as conceptual art. Conceptual art by its character has an inclination to aggravate powerful and possibly even severe reactions in its viewers. Whilst a number of people perceive conceptual art very inspirational and significant but most of viewers believe it shocking, sometimes repulsive, and evidently deficient in craftsmanship. This way Conceptual art appears as a form that we either like or dislike.

On the other hand this troublesome quality is distant from unintentional. A number of conceptual arts enthusiastically are taken discordant in its distinctiveness as it seeks to deal with and explore about what we are likely to take meticulous in the field of art. This characteristic of suggesting disagreement and debate lies at the implausible character of what conceptual art is meant for. Specifically to make us question about what qualifies as art and the role of the artist but also on the subject of what our responsibility as viewers should engross. The most important question was how these entities might be visualized as works of art. Will they be considered as statements, suggestion, credentials, and works of analysis or academic essays?<sup>[23]</sup>

It is not a matter of shock that conceptual art can sometimes cause frustration or annoyance – to elevate complicated and occasionally even aggravating questions is specifically what conceptual art in common aims to do. In responding robustly to conceptual art we are in a number of significant senses that are playing correct into its hands. For many historians it is difficult to draw the boundaries of conceptual art and it is not clear which work to include in it. The first complexity is that a theoretical analysis of postmodern art comes across has to do with classifying the object of assessment, or at least the sort of objects that are under inquiry. Then again conceptual art was considered nothing less than the turning point in changing past into present.

Various art critics and philosophers mark era of conceptual art from 1940 onwards and some from 1960 so a point of disagreement lies here but on a firm historical interpretation. The expression known as 'conceptual art' or 'Contemporary art' refers to the artistic movement of 1966 and 1972 that reached its pinnacle. In west among its famous supporters of early phase we find some prominent artists such as Joseph

Kosuth, Joseph Beuys, Robert Morris, and Adrian Piper. Objectives that connect the conceptual art of contemporary period from other twentieth century art movements such as Surrealism, Dadaism, Abstract Expressionism and the Fluxus group, are known as free art from strict Modernist archetypes. So was doing Ijazul Hassan by keeping him away from modern models and taking a step further from Andy Warhol who made a valuable point that a dollar note becomes a million, here she was basically proving the significance of idea than visual.

Ijazul Hassan was much inspired from the aesthetics of this new contemporary expression known as 'Post Modern'. He delivered his ideas by taking intelligent turns in the medium of painting. Much fascinated with the power of advertisement hoardings, posters pasted on the walls of cities, cinema hoardings, media images such as newspapers or magazines clippings he observed and absorbed popular imagery of the time used them for his purpose of idea.<sup>[24]</sup> With the passage of time artists developed a variety of art expressions availing opportunities of travelling abroad and studying the work of other contemporaries out of the country. Pakistani art was though influenced by contemporary masters but foreign influences could not be ignored. Influences from abroad were also absorbed in works of various artists and provided new dimensions to contemporary art. These foreign influences have always stimulated connecting countries and continents and adding together new dimension to exhilarating period of development and alteration. Art deadens without the freedom to accept new ideas in creative works and end up generating new scope of exploration.<sup>[25]</sup>

Significantly conceptual produced in 60s and 70s required to prevail over surroundings in opposition to such art that aims to fabricate something beautiful or aesthetically pleasing. A crucial thrust of Conceptual art in the 1960s was the often affirmed intent to prevail over the domination of formalism applying principle that the concept or idea has primacy over visual results but aesthetics remained useful and potential revolutionary tool for the production of artworks. According to Webster's explanation 'aesthetics' is the study or idea of beauty. By this exceptional justification, aesthetics as a gauge for art is an account whose content is outside of art.<sup>[26]</sup> Conscious measures of aesthetics are applied in the art works of many artists in Pakistan working in various mediums and concepts. The resources of artistic expression in postmodern or contemporary art are countless and topics of investigation on hand for questioning and conversation are immeasurable.

The analysis of Conceptual Art is complex by limiting the field of orientation of the term. As a catch- all label 'Conceptual Art' was used for a variety of artistic works that oppose insertion in more fastidious procedural categories of sculpture and painting. Since 70s, 'Conceptual' has been extensively used as something that grasps or contains odds and ends on a wide variety of things.<sup>[27]</sup>

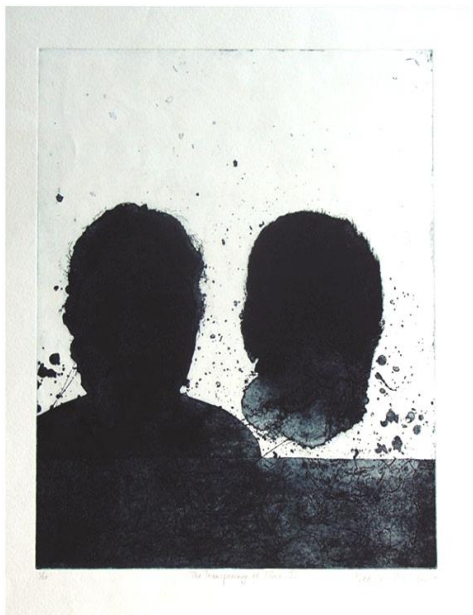
Initial leading point of consideration and debate is that postmodern conceptual art confronts an intuition regarding the limits of what can be determined as art and what an artist does. It is possible by hypothesizing ever more multifaceted objects as artwork or by isolating the responsibility of the artist from the making and manoeuvring of the artistic material.

Many of conventional certainties in art at the beginning of twenty-first century are debatable. What is the work of art? What it means to connect as a spectator with art? What association of art has to do with customary art? What is the connection of art with politics as well as to other cultures and cultural fields including internet or mass media? These are all questions that stand persistently on 'art' today due to its diverse conduct.<sup>[28]</sup>

A process of questioning is a distinctive way in which conceptual art explores the boundaries of the artwork. This is where the sphere of the artistic notion split and where function begins. Further findings about Conceptual Art reject traditional artistic mediums such as painting or sculpture. As an alternative it has found itself directed to unusual means of expression, including performances, photography, films, videos, and all new mixed mediums. Freely combining modern ethnicity with tradition, artists continued to expand the potential discovered by preceding generation and kept on insert additional dimensions. Popular art movement assimilates truck art, cinema hoardings and wedding motifs in the cities and urban areas. Artists explored freely electronic media, digital art forms, photography and film to communicate expressions in individual ways.<sup>[29]</sup> All the way through the years of varying art scene, every decade produced exceptional artists. While addressed intellect the maturity of art established little support from the public sector. Since most of the prominent museums and galleries were opened by wealthy individuals. Contemporary artists working within the postmodern conceptual art rejected the theory of conventional art and gripped the idea of pluralism in art. Artist's acceptance to a variety of creative objectives and approaches whether inclined in performance art, pop art, Minimalism, or video, provided unlimited variety of materials, sources and made it possible to create an infinite range of art. Consequently it became difficult to briefly sum up and precisely reflect the complication of thought and materials used by contemporary artists.

A number of female artists working in various mediums addressed remarkable concepts with boldness about human body and female body. Concerns with the body have always been central to Nazish Ata Ullah's works. She approached the female body in numerous unusual ways, such as allegorically, sexually and politically. Sometimes draped in a *dopata*, *chadar* or hidden within the folds of a *burqa*, the body has been deliberately covered to increase the problem of the unidentified and the silenced. In her latest works she is focusing at the ageing body and shared some initial

concerns. Parts of the body with personal items juxtaposed, such as spectacles or false teeth. These things show the dependence of body with the passage of time. (Plate.8)



**Plate.8** *Transparency of Time V*, Nazish Ata Ullah, 2004.

Source: contemporary Pakistani Printmakers, <http://www.sarah-hopkins.co.uk/theartist/FMCarchive/images/artists/naazishataullah/Transparencyoftime1.jpg>.

Installations of Nilofer Akmut are large conceptual works employing light and sound and later element of performance came to be integrated. Materials including photographs, plastic, wood, metals and textile are diverse in mood and character. She preferably worked on themes like militarization, madness of nuclear testing, and human body as a site of investigation in political and sexual reference and female gaze investigating herself outside social system. (Plate.9-10)



**Plate.9** *Testimonial*, Nilofer Akmut, 1999.

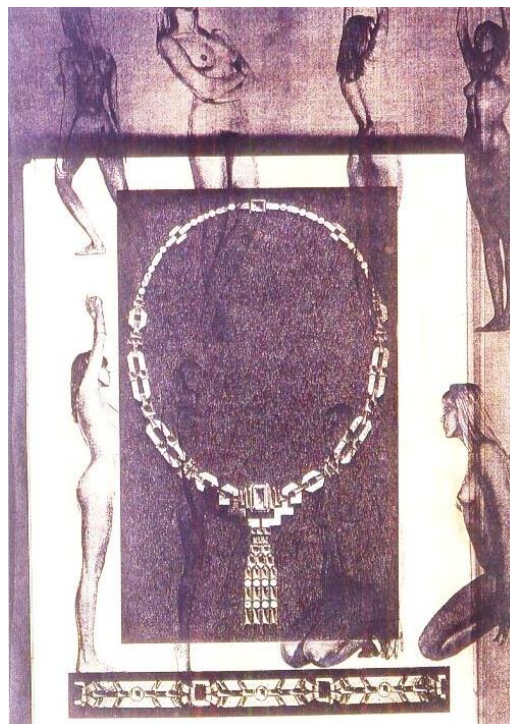
Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 93.



**Plate.10** *Head on Bed Series*, Nilofer Akmut, 2002.

Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 92.

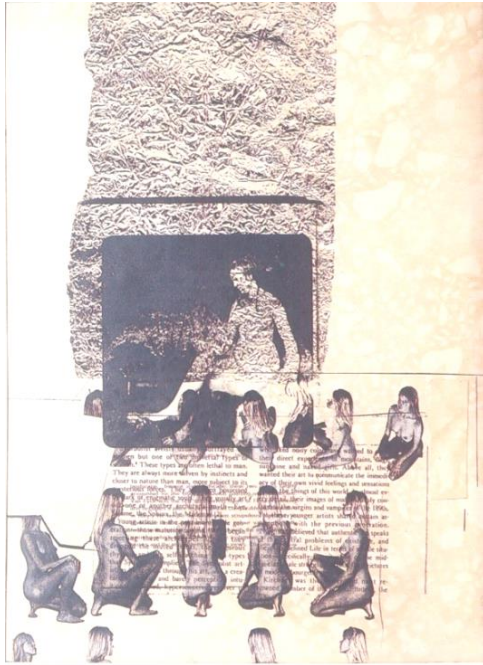
Naiza H. Khan and Sumayya Durrani also proved determined to investigate all about female. Sumayya tried to examine her own role as a woman and how female body is used in art. (Plate.11-12) Whereas Naiza exploring the uncertain and multifaceted relationship between the female body and female's uniqueness and female bias determined by the dialogue of social system. She struggled to create an independent feminine subjectivity which is relevant to her own personal realities. (Plate.1)



**Plate.11** *Faceless Nude Series*, Sumayya Durrani, 1995.

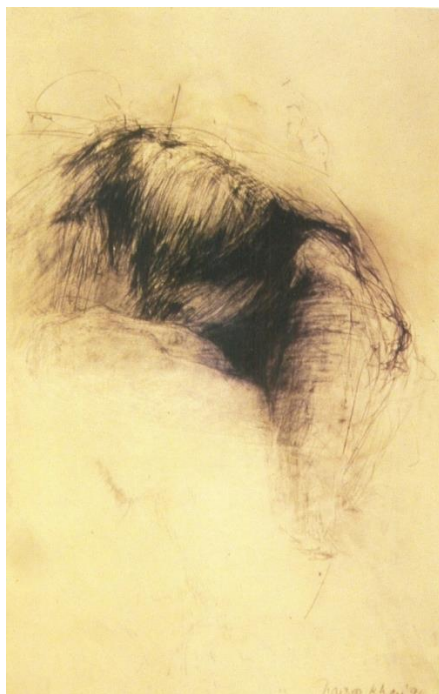
Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 111.





**Plate.12** *Faceless Nude Series*, Sumayya Durrani, 1995.

Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 110.



**Plate.13** *Fragment*, Naiza H. Khan, 1995.

Source: Hashmi, and Mirza. *50 Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan*. 111.

Contemporary art in Pakistan is an assorted and exciting phenomenon swiftly growing and recognized by exhibitions in worldwide art circles, and a strong existence in overseas art museums and Biennials. In the late 80s, a contemporary miniature movement that began and introduced artists like Shazia Sikandar, Imran Qureshi and their appeared exciting worldwide interest.<sup>[30]</sup> These

artists commented on socio political, religious and cultural dialogue, which existed in their region and world. Imran Qureshi after completing his academic curriculum of traditional miniature painting initiated his own artistic idiom. He revived painstaking skill of miniature painting and further strengthened it with contemporary themes that made him an artist of never ending possibilities. He assertively worked on shimmering fine surface of traditional *wasli* and cracked or grained surface of bricks and mortar. He also added up with old second books, printed papers of magazine or journals as a layer of *wasli*. Qureshi's miniatures are exceptional in the conversion of his miniature proficiency on architectural spaces. Slowly emerging and taking over the space his organic motifs become part of the existing space.<sup>[31]</sup> He extended his scale from customary miniature arrangement to unusual architectural buildings for his remarkable installations. In his installations an outlined pictorial awareness is combined with a confidence on visual and spatial judgment. In his involvement in architectural and community spaces he gives appearance to less significant dimension of a symbolic, political and social order. His famous installation works in India, Pakistan and Singapore has set entirely a revolutionary trend in the field of miniature. (plate.14)



**Plate.14** *Installation*, Khoj Artists' Residency, Imran Qureshi, 2001.

Source: Naqvi, and Williams. *Portraits and Vortexes: Ayesha Khalid and Imran Qureshi*, 102.

For all these reasons the kind of depiction engaged in conceptual artworks is most excellently portrayed in terms of the diffusion of thoughts. In conceptual art the demonstration at work can normally be judged as semantic or related to meaning in language or logic rather than illustrative. It sets out to communicate an explicit meaning rather than to depict a landscape, a portrait or an event. With a possibility in many ways

where a work makes use of evocative display conceptual art is still putting that image to a characteristically semantic use.

Shazia Sikander since moving to the US in 1992 has been investigated ways to enlarge and pull apart the language of miniature painting in different media and at diverse scales, generate a mixed imagery that blur such division as Hindu and Muslim, traditional and contemporary, symbol and abstraction. Essentially to the work is the fluidity with which transfer awareness and confront our ways of seeing. (Plate.15)

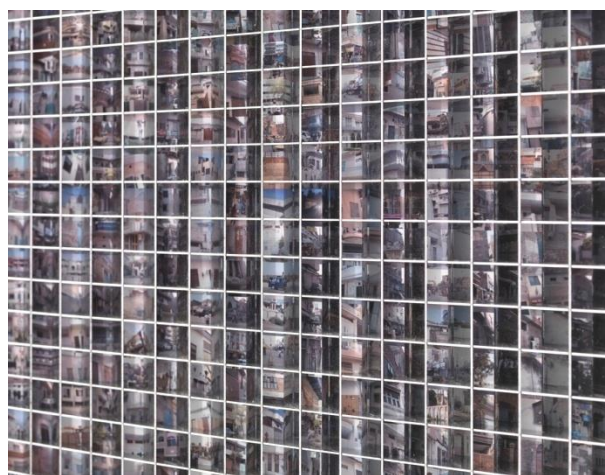


**Plate.15** *Knock, knock whose there? Mithilia, Mithilia who?* Shazia Sikander, 1996.

Source: Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible*, 179.

Variety of expressions using dissimilar media including painting, drawing, music, singing, poetry and text, theatre and circus, photography, videography, cinema and performances also public art interventions, architecture and sculpture etc. All these transmit an aesthetic or symbolic aspect despite of whether their substance is holy or blasphemous or political or in some cases apolitical. Skilfully passing through the different mediums like painting, video, installation and photography, Rashid Rana has come into view as one of the most important artist of his generation, making his existence felt worldwide. His work deals with everyday subjects

surrounding a wide variety of ideas from urbanization and popular culture to faith and ritual. He frequently utilize video installations and still photography. His series assembled with amalgamated photomontages in which each main image is created out of innumerable smaller photos of absolutely opposite theme. The viewer confronts an instant of sudden removal after moving closer to the picture when one becomes aware of the several tiny images that comprise the larger one. Rana's ability to recognize and develop these tensions between the total and its parts in his pointillist photographs has turned out to be his characteristic. (Plate.16)



**Plate.16** *Untitled*, Rashid Rana, 2010-11

Source: <http://www.lissongallery.com/exhibitions/rashid-rana>.

In '*Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*' Lewitt wrote, "The idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work, but presuming the necessity of a material object, it has to look like something if it has some physical form." [32] A large number of essentially revisionary characteristic of contemporary conceptual art in Pakistan is the way in which artists state publicly that art in itself is the art of the mind to a certain extent than the senses. Conventional artistic media are rejected because it establishes the artwork at the level of ideas rather than only objects. For the reason, artistic development inclines into intellectual investigation and manifestation rather than only beauty and aesthetic pleasure. Uniqueness of the work of art is considered the idea at the heart of the art piece or subject. And contemporary artists are remarkably contributing to this theory. The role of the artist is of a thinker rather than object maker. For this reason conceptual art calls for a methodical analysis of the way that distinguishes, connects and appreciates artworks.

## Conclusion

During foundation years after independence of Pakistan artistic language and creations come under fastidious attacks. Pioneers of art in Pakistan made a strong contribution to give solid foundation and recognition to

the subject of fine arts. Art can freely communicate blatant messages and symbolic ethics in a powerful way. In Pakistan the production of art presents an image of semi democratic forms of expression. In its various powerful expressions and mediums sometimes it seems partly unpredictable, unfathomable, brilliant, moody, and guided by stimulation and genius. The customary notion of the artist's role potentially proves its strong existence and recognition. Accelerate form of contemporary artistic production create punch and are exaggerated in appearance, sensation and contact with viewers due to intellectual approach.

This conceptual approach in art offers questioning about various issues of socio political worth where function begins and the realm of the artistic expression ends. Conceptual art rejects established artistic media such as conservative manner of painting or sculpture and widens the way of exploring new mediums. It also involves unusual expression including performances, technology such as photography, video, and films, happenings or events, a variety of mixed media and ready-mades. Contemporary artists working within the postmodern conceptual art rejected the theory of conventional art and gripped the idea of pluralism in art. Artist's acceptance to a variety of creative objectives and approaches whether inclined in performance art, pop art, Minimalism, or video, provided unlimited variety of materials, sources and made it possible to create an infinite range of art. Consequently it became difficult to briefly sum up and precisely reflect the complication of thought and materials used by contemporary artists.

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