



KARACHI NAMA

by Ahmed Javed
(Behind the Scenes in
an Artist's Studio & More)

Curated by Adeel uz Zafar

David Elliott, Chair Judge, The Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2019 on Ahmed Javed

In a field of extremely tight competition, Ahmed Javed's gouache 'Imran Qureshi Studio' has been unanimously proclaimed the winner of The 2019 Sovereign Asian Art Prize. Working on a large scale that quotes the neo-miniature style taught at his alma mater, the National College of Arts in Lahore, Javed comments on and transforms this traditional way of working. By concentrating on a moment of creation in Imran Qureshi's studio where he was an assistant, not only does he stress the importance of his former teacher's work but also reveals its powerful context. Qureshi is shown making the gestural, blood-red hand paintings that shattered the atmosphere, scale and hierarchical methods of the traditional Mughal miniature to depict horror and terror in the present. In this work, Javed records, frames, amplifies and pays homage to this moment.



David Elliott is a cultural and art historian, writer, curator and museum director primarily concerned with modern and contemporary art. Elliott was Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, England from 1976-96, Director of Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden from 1996-2001, the founding Director of the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan from 2001-06 and in 2007, the first Director of Istanbul Modern, Turkey. From 1998-2004, he was President of CIMAM (the International Committee of ICOM for Museums and Collections of Modern Art) and in 2008, he was the Rudolf Arnheim Guest Professor of Art History at Humboldt University, Berlin and from 2012 to 2017 a guest professor in curatorship at the Chinese University, Hong Kong. Since 2010 he has been the Artistic Director of biennales of contemporary art in Sydney, Kiev, Moscow and Belgrade and is currently Vice-Director and Senior Curator of the Redtory Museum of Contemporary Art in Guangzhou.

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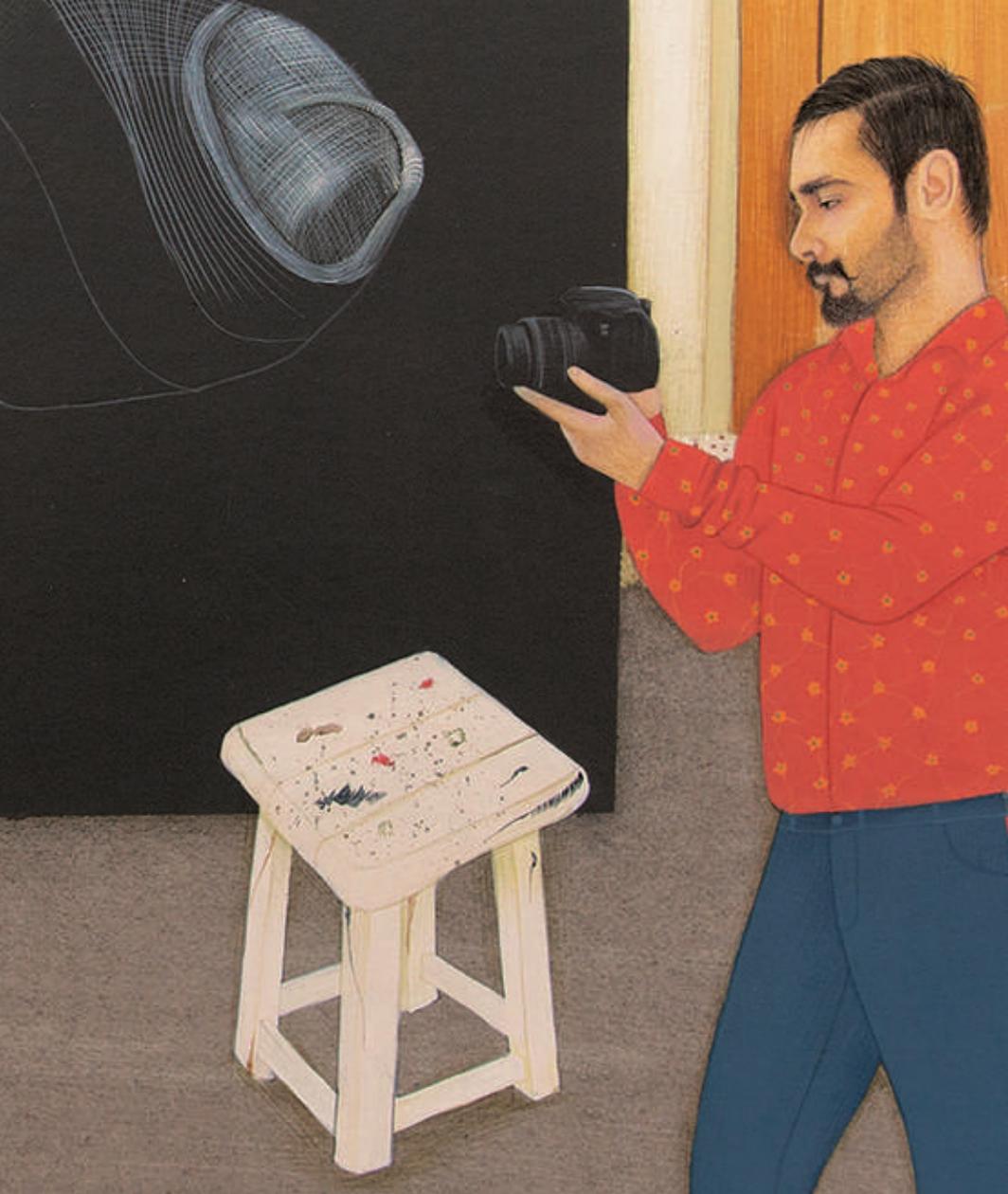
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Karachinama - Behind the Scenes in an Artist's Studio & More - presents six paintings by Ahmed Javed and is an extension of Lahorenama exhibited at Sanat Initiative in August 2018.

This ongoing project arose from an idea led by mutual discourse between the artist and curator initially over a period of one year has become a documentation of keen curiosity about the major players initially of the Lahore and now Karachi art scene – recognized as some of the important personalities in the contemporary art world – what they are like, their artistic process, where they work and more. Ahmed has investigated and decided to document these contemporary artists in an up-close and personal way, while they pursue daily practice in their workspace or elsewhere which serves as a creative center for experimentation. The project also particularizes the discourse of a workshop (the concept of Mughal atelier where apprentices worked under masters) to a complete paradox of an independent artist's space in which they are free to pursue their own imagery and artistic agenda.

The final list of the artists featured in Karachinama is based on two criteria: one is about being a Karachite and the other is about connecting with the artist on a personal level in order to be allowed to step into their territories without any insecurity. For this venture Ahmed contacted many of his personal favorites but the choices came down to the artists who graciously agreed on allowing him into their world. The artist has also portrayed himself in one of the work as masterminding the project. These works are brave, precious, extremely stimulating and unique - an attempt like this has never been made before especially in connection with modern and contemporary miniature practice. This ongoing investigation has also been appreciated internationally and homage to Imran Qureshi's contribution to the neo-miniature movement by documenting him in his studio (from Lahorenama) has won the 15th annual Sovereign Asian Art Prize for 2019 in Hong Kong. The jurors gave Imran Qureshi's Studio by Ahmed Javed the highest score in the history of the Prize.

Adeel uz Zafar





Munawar Ali Syed in his studio, 2019
Gouache on wasli, 102 x 152 cm



Naiza Khan in her studio, 2019
Gouache on wasli, 102 x 152 cm



*Shakil Saigol in an outdoor setting presenting him as a painter and art patron/collector, 2019
Gouache on wasli, 152 x 102 cm*



Muhammad Zeeshan at Darzi, 2019
Gouache on wasli, 152 x 102 cm



Adeel uz Zafar in his studio being documented by Ahmed Javed – Artist and Curator (diptych), 2019

Gouache on wasli, 53 x 69 cm (each)





Adeela Suleman in her studio, 2019
Gouache on wasli, 69 x 53 cm

My work revolves around questioning and at times contesting the 'modernization' of miniature painting while focusing on working with the traditional style of miniature art. Traditional miniature has always captured my attention, hence as a way forward to find my subject I went back to move forward, through contemporary life documentation. My journey led me towards documenting contemporary artists, in their studios and beyond their workspace; in an up-close and personal way.

In continuation to my previous show 'Lahorenama' this series is about building a narrative based on the Life of Artists, in future shaping a manuscript. These scriptures in past envisioned the glorified life of rulers. In my work I intend to present the life of contemporary artists. These works also particularize the transformation from the discourse of workshops and apprenticeships of the past era, into a complete paradox of an independent artist's studio in which he is free to pursue his own imagery and artistic agenda.

In this body of work I seek to document through stylization, technique and multiple-perspectives based on the actual environments and people around me. The colour schemes have been inspired from the old Mughal miniatures. I have played around with the size and perspective of certain areas, objects and figures to denote their elevated status or importance much like traditional Mughal miniatures. My work seeks to preserve the traditional practice while acknowledging its existence in present context.

Ahmed Javed

Ahmed Javed was born in 1992 and raised in Lahore, Pakistan from where he continues to work. Javed graduated in Miniature Painting from National College of Arts, Lahore in 2016. Through his practice he documents life in the present. He seeks to preserve traditional miniature while acknowledging its existence within the present context. Javed generally makes figurative work or/and paint the environment around him to document the interactive relationship between the man and his surroundings.

Javed has been awarded the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2019. He has done numerous group shows around the globe, two solo shows and a residency at Sanat Initiative in the past three years. Apart from this he has been part of multiple projects namely: 'Maktab' project in Lahore Biennale by Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, and 'Space in Time' project for Rietberg Museum, Zürich.

This publication accompanies the exhibition

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Sanat Initiative, Commune Artist Colony, Sadiq Godown
Miskeen Gali, off M.T. Khan Road, Karachi

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