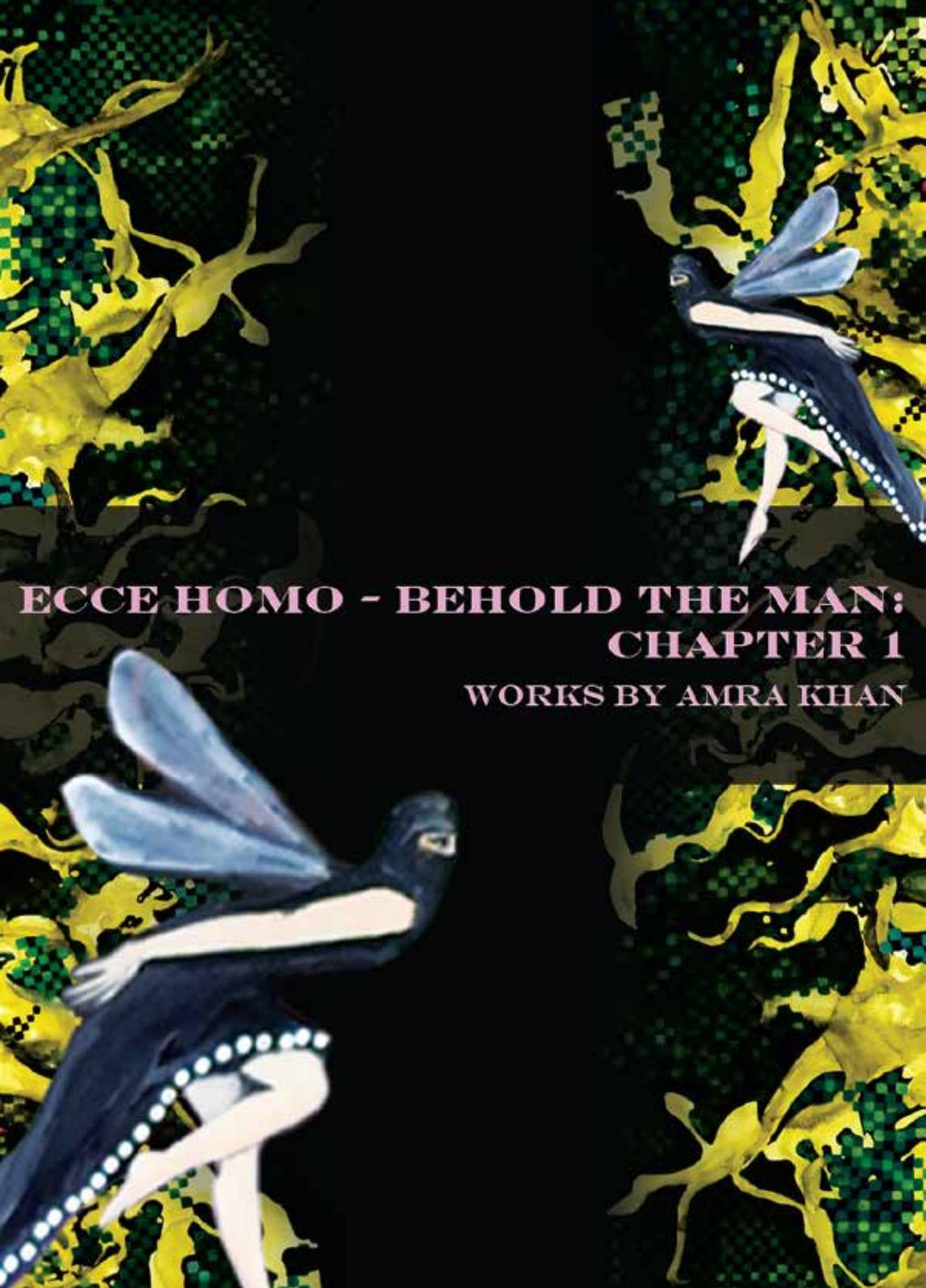




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**ECCE HOMO - BEHOLD THE MAN:
CHAPTER 1**

WORKS BY AMRA KHAN



My Messiah, oil on canvas print, 152 x 122 cm, 2015

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Manhood is an aberration; it is a struggle to break free of or even rebel against the fond nature of this universe. Men are trained to be "men" - the unyielding, the tenacious, the overbearing, the opportunistic. Men survive manhood training. They learn the rituals and come out a little damaged, here and there, between transitions, finally managing to make the grade as "just" a little functional. The greatest sufferers of the violence of men are other men.

"Femaleness" of humanity is inexorably tied to a time when a being is a fetus, growing and blossoming while feeding on the "femaleness" that is the universe. The development of "maleness" is complex and precarious, with an ever-present struggle with a natural inclination to return the way of the universe, restraint from which damages men while strengthening their "maleness".

For the sons of Adam, the songs of innocence have given way to the songs of experience. The boy breaks from his infantile past, the brutal segregation is enforced between two beings that were once one. Gender is slowly enforced upon him. Roles are given not chosen. Choices are made. Machismo is way at the cost of humanity.

"What if?"

"Could I?"

"Must I?"

"But?"

Doubts. Thoughts. Desires. Needs.

"There is no clarity!"

Doubts. Doubts subdued with blood; by the loud screaming engines' wails; with misguided lust projecting the mighty might of testosterone.

"I AM BIGGER."

"I AM STRONGER."

It hides, always, something. Be it a longing or a desire. Unhappy on either side of the fence.

The more I see, the less I believe in the "Nihari Republic of Bakistan" for independence is slowly being eroded by a reliance on a fantastical version of Islamic "maleness". "Don't ask, don't tell" anyone except when just "happens" to be in a "maleness" measuring contest with a fellow Bakistani. Gender. Tender. Orange line. Red White Elephants. You can't beat the stealing.

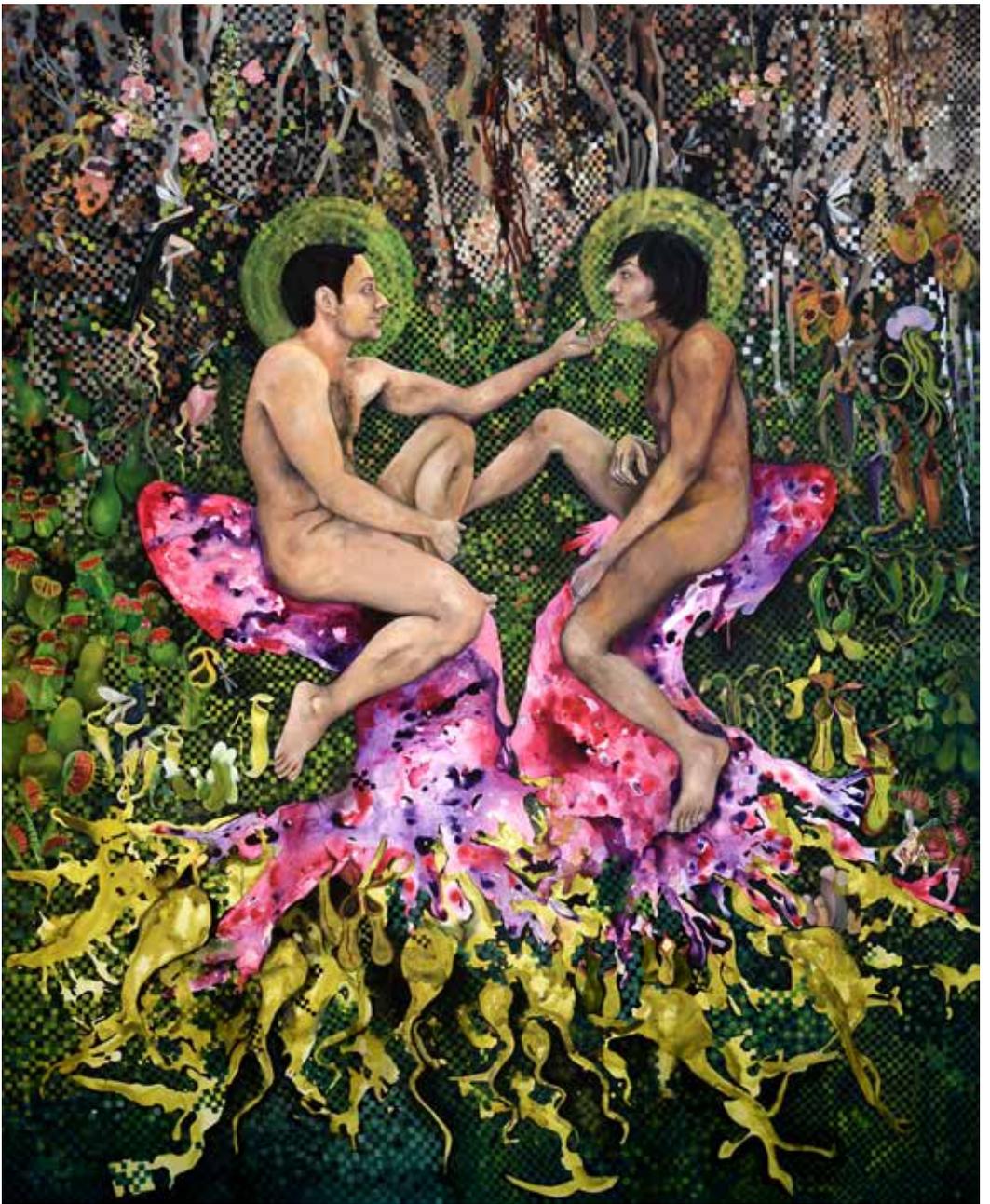
But, why this ostentatious display? Even in the absence of the fairer sex. Is there more afoot than meets the eye? Or is it just a pair of rutting canines marking their territory?

"HEY MA! LOOK ITS ME!"

This is Chapter 1.



Mullah Krishna's devotion on the outside, acrylic on canvas with embellishment, 122 x 91 cm, 2015



Adam & Adeel and the garden of earthly delights, oil and acrylic on canvas, 262 x 213 cm, 2015



When they met, oil on canvas, 204 x 125 cm, 2015

INTRODUCTION

SHAHANA RAJANI

Amra Khan's exhibition, *Ecce Homo* is a radically different interpretation than the one associated with its title's original author, Pontius Pilate. Pilate, in distancing himself from the question as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was "just a man" or "the son of God", was said to have pointed to the battered Jesus and adjudicated: "Ecce Homo" (Behold the Man!). Khan's works take the being of the man as their point of departure. She performs a queering of theological representations, challenging the dominant mode of heterosexuality propagated by both church and state.

Talking of the contradictions in religion, specifically Christianity, Richard Rambuss in *Closet Devotions* writes:

"For here is an institution whose culturally venerable assessment of same-sex desire is (perhaps now more than ever) predominantly censorious, yet one which has also sought to stimulate devotion by the display of a male body iconized in *extremis* - a nearly naked man offered up to our gazes ("Ecce Homo") for worship, desire and various kinds of identification."

Khan enacts a similar critique of normative metanarratives of desire, by reclaiming and rediscovering queerness hidden and repressed from mainstream visibility in Pakistan. Neither the father of the state nor the upholders of religion are kept removed from their humanity. Desire, vanity, sexuality, all the things that have been erased in creating myths of heroism and purity of Jinnah before and the clergy today are returned in an act of subversion to the male figures that uphold and shape Pakistan discursively.



The Three Grace, acrylic on canvas board, 23 x 28 cm, 2015



The boy at the tea stall,
oil on canvas board, 41 x 25 cm (frame included), 2015



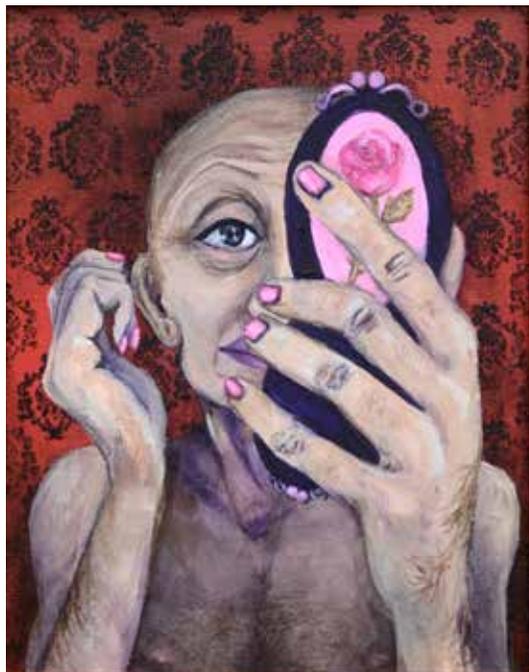
The keeper of the gates,
oil on canvas board, 44 x 32 cm (frame included), 2015



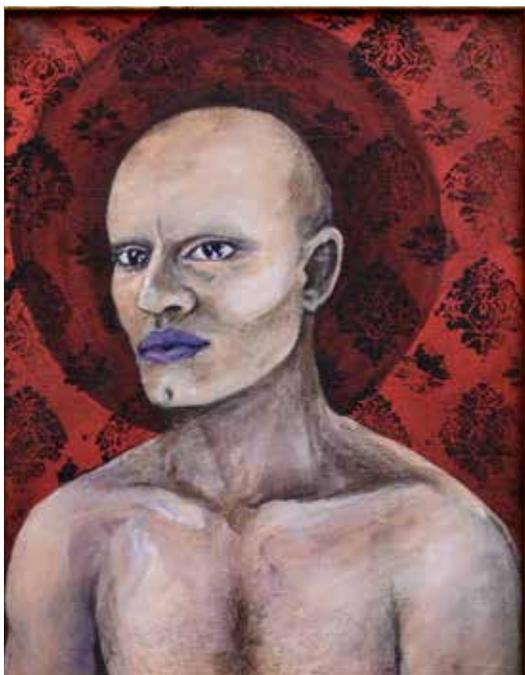
Band Boys (diptych), acrylic on canvas board, 23 x 18 cm (each), 2015



Brown Girl, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 25 cm, 2015



Rosie, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 25 cm, 2015,



Grace, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 25 cm, 2015



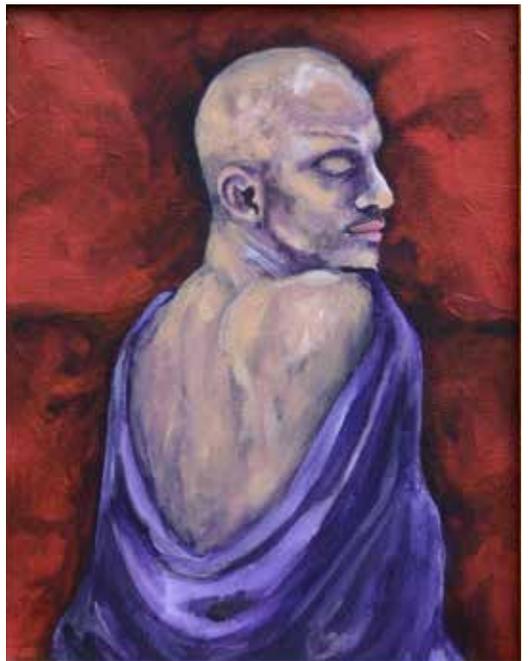
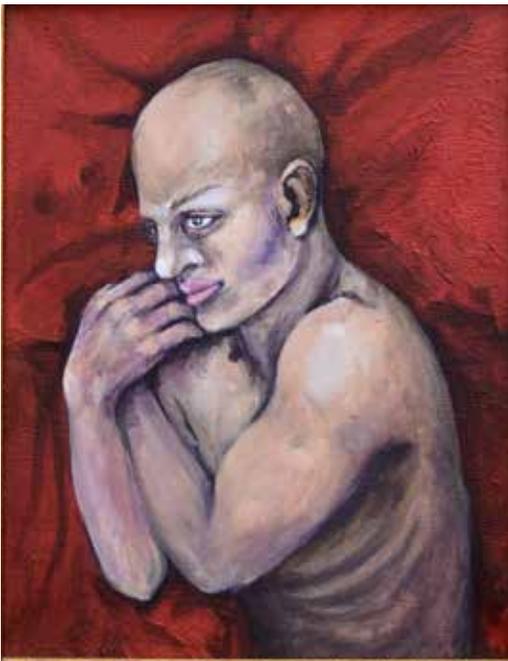
Sugar, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 25 cm, 2015



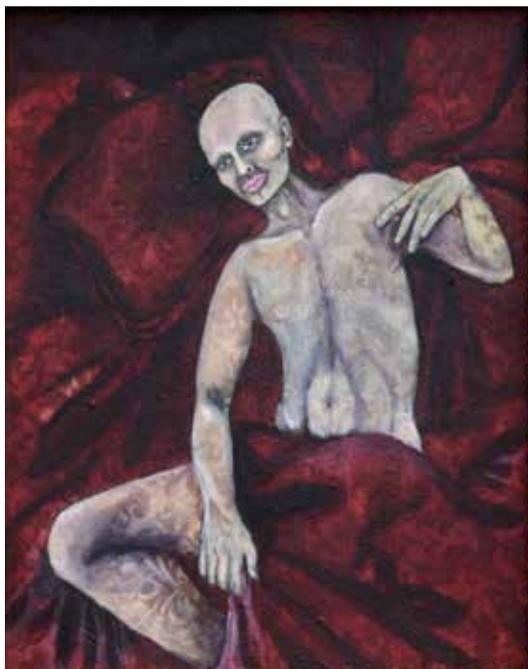
Edible Bouquet, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30, 2015



The Image, acrylic on canvas, 22 x 27 cm, 2015



The Disconnected (diptych), acrylic on canvas, 30 x 25 cm (each)



The Wait, oil on canvas board, 36 x 25 cm, 2015

THE CULT OF J

SHAHANA RAJANI

I - J with dogs

When General Pervez Musharraf seized power and declared martial law in 1999, one of the important tasks facing him was to strategize self-representation. How should he represent himself to the nation and the world? How to re-brand the reality of a military dictator into an image of a modern, democratic leader? After much thought, he found that the answer lay with Jinnah and his dogs. Taking inspiration from the popular photograph of Jinnah posing with his two dogs, Musharraf's first media photo-op also featured both his dogs. It is said that around this time he even framed and displayed the photo of J with dogs in his living room. He used the portrait of Jinnah to legitimise himself as a secularist modernizer, and a dog lover.



II - J the father

More recently, in 2014, the MQM party in Karachi used Jinnah to represent Altaf Hussain. Rather than reproducing a visual portrait similar to Jinnah, the billboard made use of the discursive tag line "Father of the Nation" in an attempt to claim Altaf as the rightful heir to Jinnah's legacy, Pakistan's true leader in the here and now. However, these billboards caused uproar in Karachi. People demanded they be taken down immediately for "dishonouring the founder of the country" by terming the MQM chief as the "Father of the Nation."



III - J in the art world

A colonization of Jinnah's visual identity has taken place to produce a hegemonic national spectacle, which lends itself for use by all. Politicians most regularly use the sacred nationalist icon of Jinnah in their advertising campaigns to lend legitimacy to their own careers and agendas, as discussed in the two cases above. This imagery also lends itself to use by artists. There exists a recent tradition in which artists have staked a claim in the politics of nationalist representations, by problematizing and exposing the constructions/fabrications/complicities of visuality in national narratives.



Bani Abidi's *The Address* (2007) is an early example. The artist commissioned a background painting resembling the set used for televised presidential speeches.

Against the backdrop of blue curtains, this set included a desk, microphone, a Pakistani flag and a portrait painting of Jinnah. Most conspicuous was the absence of the president. Displayed on TV sets in various public spaces in Lahore – dhabas, restaurants, parlours and electronic storefronts – this vacant set teased at the political flux, uncertainty and vacuum in the nation. Jinnah's portrait loomed over (and in place of) the absent present leader, a commentary on how all presidents, dictators and politicians over the decades have consistently used/manipulated the image of Jinnah to legitimate their own political ideologies.



Imran Channa continued this critique forward by posing a challenge for his viewers: Find the Real Jinnah (2008). Through digital manipulation, he juxtaposed seven different images representing different roles, attires and characteristics of Jinnah. Amid all these versions, the term "real" has no relevance. Because in the end, none of these representations are real. Each photograph is an isolated instance from his life, a captured moment amongst infinite others. Yet each photo is used by different groups for different means – to further secular, liberal, modern, religious, nationalist agendas. All the grey areas of complexity reduced to either black or white.

Amra Khan, in her latest exhibition *Ecce Homo*, departs from these earlier art precedents, refusing altogether to reproduce the fixed, static, mainstream images of Jinnah. Instead, she stakes a claim in the right to represent after her own desires, dreams and aspirations. While Abidi was invested in engaging publics in urban spaces, Amra Khan retreats into private space. Each of her Jinnah images is presented/preserved in small frames, usually used in homes for display of family pictures and loved ones. There is an intimacy in experiencing these images through a more personalized setting rather than the distancing, de-humanizing apparatus of the media.

Khan's series undertakes a drastic re-imagining of the cult-images of Jinnah. She paints Jinnah in varying poses and personas: as a fat man, a mullah, a groom and a tranny. He is even shown lying on his bed, and although fully clothed, the setting and pose strongly evoke the tradition of reclining female nude paintings. Khan radically transforms the sacred national icon of Jinnah into a potentially sexual, vulnerable being, at the mercy of the viewer's gaze. Giorgio Agamben's concept of "profanation" helps to clarify her process. He writes:

"To know how to profane is to know how to return things that have become subject to a state of sacred exception – things that have been consecrated – to their original – profane – context."

Agamben explains therefore that to profane something is not to defile it, but to liberate it, to remove it from the sphere of the sacred. Khan, in her act of profanation, shatters and fragments the national visual narratives we are so accustomed to seeing. She also reminds us that the nationalist project is complicit in the construction of heterosexual masculinity, and the marginalization and disciplining of queerness. In defiance, she enacts her own queering of Jinnah's idealized representations to reveal the abject "others", that are hidden under wraps, expelled from view.



Shaadi J, acrylic on canvas board, 39 x 32 cm (frame included), 2015



Tranny J, acrylic on canvas board, 21 x 21 cm (frame included), 2015



J Jani, oil on canvas board, 21 x 15 cm (frame included), 2015



Mullah J, oil on canvas board, 23 x 39 cm (frame included), 2015



Fat J, oil on canvas board, 15 x 15 cm, 2015



Yummy J, acrylic on canvas board, 26 x 20 cm, 2015



Bed time J, oil on canvas board, 20 x 25 cm 2015



AMRA FATIMA KHAN

EDUCATION

- Masters (Hons) Visual Arts, MA**, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan 2010 - 2012
MA. Exchange Student École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA) Paris, France 2010 - 2011
Bachelors of Fine Arts, BFA, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan 2004 - 2008
Bachelors of Science, BSc, College of Home Economics, Gulberg, Lahore, Pakistan 1999 - 2003
Matriculation, Sacred Heart Cathedral High School, Lahore, Pakistan 1999

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Teacher's Assistant and Research Assistant at The National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan for the Departments of First Year Foundation & Fine Arts (2008 to 2012)
- Teacher's Assistant and Research Assistant Beaconhouse National University's SVAD Faculty from January 2013 to June 2013 and assisted Risham Syed in teaching: Costume in History
- Senior Faculty O'Level Arts at Lahore Grammar School, 55- Main Gulberg (2013 to present)

EXHIBITIONS

Solo Shows

- 2015 July 31st "Ecce Homo - Behold the Man: Chapter 1", solo show at Sanat Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2011 February 17th "Gender Nectar" "Nectar des Sexes", GalerieSauvet Gallery, Paris, France.

Group Show

- 2015 June 9th "Nishanna" group show at Canvas Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2015 April 19th "Silsila 2015" Studio RM Alumni show at Sanat Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.

- 2015 January 26th 'About Her', a two person show at Color Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2013 April 24th "My name is Khan" group show at Indus Valley School Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2013 February 12th Punjab Artists Exhibition at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore
- 2012 December 13th "Usman aur Mein" group show at Koel Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2012 November 20th "Unbruised" 3 person show at The Drawing Room Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2012 25th August "Just ordinary tales" group show at VM. Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2012 May 29th "The Noose" 2 person show at Canvas Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2012 February 9th "Main" group show at Koel Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2012 January 7th MA Hon. Visual Arts Degree Show at Zahoorul Akhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts, Lahore.
- 2011 December 2nd "Imperfection" at Rohtas Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- 2011 October 28th "Looking through the wider lens": a group show of Pakistani women artists at Jankonssen Gallery, Basel, Switzerland.
- 2011 February 24th "Silsila" Studio RM Alumni show at Koel Art Gallery, Karachi.
- 2011 February 17th "I see you" Nomad Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- 2011 February 4th "Expo Atelier Cognée, Gallery Gauch, The École Nationale Supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris, France.
- 2011 February 3rd "Silsila" Studio RM Alumni show at Ejaz Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2011 January 6th "Expo Atelier Cognée, Gallery Gauch, The École Nationale Supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris, France."
- 2010 October 4th "Lakh war Sadkay" four person show at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2010 April 15th Young Artists Exhibition at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2010 March 24th "MazzarBazzar" ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery National College of Arts Lahore.
- 2009 June 9th "Redo Pakistan" Exhibition and Symposium at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2009 April 13th Young Artists Exhibition at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2009 April 8th "Redo Pakistan" "Shanakht Festival" at Karachi Arts Council, Karachi.
- 2009 March 24th Two person show, works from the series "Caramel Orchard" at Nairang Gallery, Lahore.
- 2009 January 26th "Stepping out 2", two person show at Rohtas Gallery Islamabad.
- 2008 December 18th "Stepping out 2" two person show at Rohtas 2 Gallery, Lahore.
- 2008 December 2nd "Democracy" ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery National College of Arts Lahore.
- 2008 November 20th "Small Scope", Exhibition at ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts.
- 2008 April 8th Young Artists Exhibition "Fresh Cream" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2008 February 21st Group exhibition "Beyond LUMS" at Lahore University of Management Sciences.
- 2008 January 13th BFA Degree show at ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts.
- 2007 June 15th "The Bhao" Exhibition at ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts.
- 2007 April 5th Young Artists Exhibition at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore..
- 2004 November Group exhibition of wood reliefs at ZahoorulAkhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts, Lahore.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

National College of Arts

- Passed with Distinction in thesis examination in 2008
- Principal's Honor List, 2005, 2006, 2007
- 1st position in the Annual Exams 4th year 2007
- 1st position in the Annual Exams 3rd year 2006
- 1st position in the Annual Exams 2nd year 2005
- 10th position in the batch in the Annual Exam 1st year 2004
- Obtained a Merit Scholarship at NCA from the year 2004 to 2007

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition

ECCE HOMO - BEHOLD THE MAN: CHAPTER 1

WORKS BY AMRA KHAN



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