

ہر جہان تو

In the realm of light

MUSSARAT MIRZA

WORKS: 1968-2021



GALLERY

Introduction

Mussarat Mirza is a living legend, an iconic figure who chose to spend her life privately, away from the metropolitan centres of art, but whose very solitude perhaps nourished exceptional vision. Today she ranks amongst the most accomplished artists of Pakistan.

Based out of Sukkur, Mirza's career spans a period of over five decades. As an art educator, she was a pioneering force in the establishment of the first Fine Art Department, Sindh University at Jamshoro. In 2022, the artist continues to paint.

Traditionally, her work has been viewed through an ethnic and genre-based lens. She has been received as the voice of Sindh, and as a landscape painter. Her work guides us though, to both acknowledge and dissolve any impulses we may have to exclude, essentialise, or freeze meaning. Her work guides towards a generosity of spirit.

Mirza paints in the way of *riyazat*. Over and again, seemingly the same content, a place, Sukkur, Upper Sindh, that steadfast gaze, its unusual unflinching power. And from it, slowly lift the virtuosities, the mastery, a higher degree of knowing upon canvas. Her passionate inner biographies, as marks, sometimes serve as a sieve for knowledge, and sometimes they are entirely distilled of selfhood.

Mirza's art appears contemporary—in its perspectives, in the drama of its surfaces. And in the same breath there is also the opposite. One wonders at the source of this mood of contemplative stillness, its depths of spaciousness, its ranging weave of lights. The 'place' she knows and is able to convey, this appears of another time, station, *maqam*. In what register does one archive her creative life- world? This query has nourished both Mussarat Mirza's retrospective and the accompanying monograph.

Maha Malik
(Curator)

Mussarat Mirza: Critical acknowledgment

There are three signal artists within the tradition of landscape in Pakistan: Ustad Allah Bakhsh, Khalid Iqbal, and Mussarat Mirza. Look closely at her 'landscapes' though, and you realise she uses the genre as a springboard or resource. She uses it to express a very deep kind of spirituality.

(Late) Saquib Hanif. Editor, art critic, collector.

One can see the skill and expressive quality of a lifetime in each of her paintings. Mussarat builds her canvases layer by layer, in rhythms adding on, taking away. Her knowledge of colour, tone, gradation—the energy of her strokes—this is masterful. In her feeling for void space, or *khala*, one may sense the artist's *dervish* temperament.

Meher Afroz. Artist.

Mirza's art hosts immeasurable connection with her physical surroundings. The ancient city of Sukkur and its environs are her lifeblood. And then she takes us even further. 'I see beyond what most people see...'

In witnessing her inspiration, one is reminded of other solitary women artists anchored to their terrain. Georgia O'Keefe's period of work in New Mexico come to mind. Despite the appearance of differences, they share true artistic kinship...

But whereas O'Keefe's legacy stands lone and majestic—a celebrated chapter in 20th century painting—a similar evaluation of Mussarat Mirza's vision feels long overdue. She is a philosopher par excellence, who thinks and speaks in the language of paint.

Salima Hashmi. Art educator, author, curator, gallerist.





Title unknown. 1983. Oil on canvas. 32 x 22 in



Two birds. 1982. Oil on canvas. 38.5 x 18.5 in



Dust storm. 1988. Oil on canvas. 24 x 36 in



Dimensions of solitude. 1988. Oil on canvas. 33.5 x 33.5 in



Title unknown. 1982-3. Oil on canvas. 33.5 x 33.5 in



Pigeon holes. 1968. Oil on canvas. 27.5 x 66.5 in



Title unknown. 2006. Oil on canvas. 29 x 29 in



Rah-e-ishq dost har sa'at. 2013. Oil on canvas. 41 x 41 in



Dar-e-tauba. 2011. Oil on canvas. 30 x 24 in



Muntazir A&B. 2011. Oil on canvas. Diptych: 10 x10 in each



Title unknown. 2006. Oil on canvas. 20.5 x 20.5 in



Muntazir. 2011. Oil on canvas. 12 x 14 in



www.koelgallery.com

F-42/2, Block 4, Clifton, Karachi, Pakistan

T. +92 (21) 35831292 | E: gallerykoel@gmail.com

