

“Augmented Miniatures: Misconception?”

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Abstract

The art of miniature painting flourished from the 13th to the 16th Century in the Middle East, currently known as Iran. By the 15th century, Persian style had progressed, exemplified by firm lines, strong colours, and a lot of detail. Behzad was the greatest advocate of this era. He brought about amalgamation in Persian painting. Balance was an important principle in Persian art. It was richly detailed with mythological and religious themes. The techniques are broadly analogous to the Western and Byzantine. Persian miniatures were also inspired by Chinese art. Mughal miniature was contemporary to the Persian civilization from which they had been instigated to learn art. The initiative step was taken at the time of Humayun’s service when two artists from Persia, Mir Sayyad Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad joined him.

This article can be cited as:

Ahmad J., (2017). “Augmented Miniatures: Misconception? Journal of Arts and Social Sciences 4 (2), 49-56.

Introduction

The Mughals had great interest in art. Moreover, after they adopted the Persian culture, it strengthened their curiosity in the field of painting giving rise to the Mughal School of Painting ca. 16th Century to the 18th Century. The Mughal School was based upon many Indian painters. The decorative element was purely Persian while traces of European influence can also be found.

For someone like Irfan Hasan, who has recently entered the business of artistry, there is perhaps no book. His impeccable talent proceeded steadily and gradually. However it is now blazing in miniature painting. He is mounting his subjects that help him express power consecutively to achieve his goal.

For a very long time, it has been debatable that miniature is the name given to a painting based on a certain scale which is supposedly very small. Many artists and art critics are in the

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favour that size does not affect a miniature painting, whilst some negate the idea entirely.

Through proper computations this article proves that the wild oversized illustrations are miniature paintings. Also involves studying art at an individual level by giving a necessary condition of the concept of miniature painting leading to a clear initiative to what is being is analyzed.

But there are very few extracts from contemporary artists and art critics. Waseem Ahmed being a contemporary artist proclaims “There is no way that you can compare a painter’s work with someone else. Every artist has his own idea and theory to present in their own specific way with their individual contemplation and secret unrevealing language.” Salwat Ali in her article asserts that Irfan Hasan rolls out as yet another variant.

A miniature enactment within the theatre of the absurd, this delightfully crazy selection is a potpourri of wit, observation and youthful exuberance spun into an individual voice. She adds to it, that extracting the technique of miniature painting from the genre he has reapplied it to a vocabulary of his creation. His figurative compositions spell a bizarre circus of surreal antics, whimsical and funny at first glance, but potent with meaning when deliberated upon. Far removed from everyday reality his protagonists emerge as players in an imaginary world but strangely enough this fantasy is underpinned with everyday concerns. It is culled from his subconscious or referenced from his personal experiences, thoughts and feelings but it critiques the anomalies in the apparent world. This is where he displays his perceptive abilities, stoking grave concerns with a humorous and at times outré expression. Salwat, in the end of her article states, “Work by emerging artists often bears traces of art of their immediate seniors but with the passage of time their uniqueness and creativity propels them to seek new directions.

”In Mr. Irfan’s second solo exhibition held at The Drawing Room Art Gallery, they said “Renowned for his extravagant large-scale miniatures Irfan Hasan’s new works are like epic lyric poems. Intensely mysterious and eerily beautiful -- a struggle between reality and myth that reveals itself slowly.” Shamim Akhter, writes in her review, “There is no mystery or metaphysics on his canvas. Like an intelligent and gifted child, he picks up things from his surroundings and, with the magic of his imagination, gives them new shapes and meaning. He has yet to culture that systematic desire to invoke the mysterious and explore infinite possibilities which continually people space around him.” While explaining his works, she put in, “Hasan’s draughtsman ship is charged with an explosive power which he has acquired with constant practice. He has added unmatched pictorial refinement and to a culture nourished on

the most sublime products of human intellect, a curious innocence. He is gifted with a magical power of line which is functional as well.”

“Nothing is purely original- all the great individuals have been inspired by contemporary concerns and historical experiences. Through sincere effort, they transform their knowledge into innovative expressions that define the future” is a statement that Mr. R.M. Naeem cited.

Some paintings are quite clear in subject while others are more imperious. Some accord with the representation of reasoning. There is a need to develop and accept that every idea can be proved true by reasoning.

At every stage in life, there is some incentive that inspires everybody. There is always something to hold on to and to become pushful in the cadence of life. Similarly, art is the blithe that determines the individuality of Mr. Irfan Hasan’s massive work, “Every idea or image is not original or new. We don’t create things. We take inspirations from the creations,” he added. Earlier artists realized that it was far more viable to convey a message and record history in a miniature painting rather than to go through the complexity of a realistic scene which was not totally realistic when seen from a close-perspective.

Then there is a grand development visible in the modern and contemporary structure of miniature. It aims on promoting a straightforward, less formal life –style and is not apprehensive to carry out the differences between people based on their social position.

Clearly, Irfan Hasan has not restricted his composition. The images are placed amidst or dispersed. The subjective sense of composition comes of its own. There is a stylistic relationship between the realistic and approach and abstract satire.

The large scale paintings do not totally mean that they are not intricate. They are just as complex as the small scale ones are but complimentarily embedded in the thoughts and the political spoof on the society rather than on the compositional design.

Since, Mr. Irfan copied a large number of Mughal and Persian works; hence, their style influence is vivid in his work. As a matter of fact he states, “The use of line, stylization of figures and forms and the arbitrary sense of composition are basically coming from the previous practice of the replica of miniature painting. What I think about my work is the re-incarnation of miniature skills.”

Whether Mughal or Persian, the paintings are peculiar in themes and subjects. But, life they express. They delineate the material world. This attests Mr. Irfan's extensive variety in imagination inflated in subconscious. We see imagination linked with what is unreal.

Without restricting his capability, through forms, he displays, deprivation, the lack of knowledge, the survival from suffocation though it might become the cause of suffocation itself.

A symbolic representation is likely that his paintings are based on self-incentive. The donkey has the proportions and shape of a human. Images are now illusory suspended as though in flight. The proper defined background with the traditional borders is now deviated towards imitating life. The tendency to show perspective has now been reversed. The figures in the middle ground are larger than those in the foreground.

The lines of the objects converged towards the spectator and not the background.

There is remarkable handling the size of the figures and their placement around the unique composition. The figures have been realistically treated as well as the meticulous rendering.

From where I perceive his work, it is also linked to post modernism. Post modernism was a time when it debated about philosophy and existence. Sensitivity to the socioeconomic and equality for all people may be seen.

Hence, Shamim Akhter identifies them in an additional compartment. "The produce of Hasan's individual genius can be linked to that constant factor in the history of art which we owe to the Sumerian monsters, Mayan sculptures, Goya's paintings, Meryon's aerial fleets etc. His 21st century phantoms are derived from his surroundings, which have been processed in the mill of his imagination. His icons make an indirect reference to politics and then slide on to aggressive statements on certain social attitudes in a light hearted way," said Shamim Akhtar.

The paintings can be analyzed through various versions.

Great sensitivity is expressed in the manner in which the expression is brought up declamatory denoting the emotional state associated with the soul (Plate No. 1). Both the figures continue to be favoured with the artists entice elements manifested with drama and objective. It displays great quality of composition through human imagination. The face is greatly stylized in a shrinking manner by the way it has been carried out. Great detail is encountered. "Scream is about an aggression of the donkey against human being because human being don't respect animals like donkey. It is about the lack of acknowledgment." The technique of rendering is yet

again linked to the Mughal style of painting. It is an off centre composition, where the viewers attention is caught by the large size of the figure with his fists clutched in tight showing strength.

If you notice, there is the usual donkey face above a human figure with an unrealistic curvy end. Plate No. 2. More like a twisted worm. Obviously this painting conveys the complexity. “The concept of blue salute is that how we are forced to obey the authorities and false gods.” The exact feathers may be seen in paintings from the Mughal era. They are placed on the cupids that are found at the top part below the inscription. Along with cupids that are situated in the foreground.

The winged children- like angels are a mark of European influence that is frequently witnessed in Mughal miniatures, sometimes holding a crown above the Kings head. They are also seen floating in the air or on the cloudy sky with musical instruments.

The clouds are an influence coming from the Baroque. The background is dull blue grayish expressing gloominess.

Thus, I construe that the inspirations are still in the way of breaking through the old traditional paintings.

Close progressiveness aesthetically penetrates through Plate No. 3. It is modified by the reflection of surroundings. “No mercy is about how small powers dominate bigger powers or how the small powered nations control on bigger nations with their power and political policies. Mouse symbolizes small power and donkey symbolizes bigger power. Its concept is socio political.” The donkey is illustrated in a minute size as compared to the mouse which is pixilated and painted with great daintiness.

One characteristic of visual arts is that it is far from what one would expect of a culture. There is a great representation of surreptitious behind the appearance of the Donkey and the dwarf. Plate No. 4. “Hasan desires to achieve total subversion and makes a clean sweep to draw forms remote from realism. In the process, on compassionate grounds, he creates a relationship between a dwarf and an ass (Mother and Child). His inspirations germinate from the mysterious world of the dream, hallucination and the subconscious. In ‘Mother and child’, he draws close two unrelated beings — an ass and a dwarf — two scorned elements of our society, left to perform menial jobs on his canvas. With sympathy he ties the two together in the most sacred relationship — that of mother and child.” Deprivation and lack of acknowledgement are tied together in a relation with a person you have been closest with the longest, the mother and child

bond. This plate eschews the strange for the normal. It seems obscene but is very well operated at a greater imaginative level through the most pure relation. The half frontal and the profile faces are but emotionless and deliberately avoided any expression. Head gestures are an attempt to present the concept perfectly in order to understand the concern in the relationship.

It is worth pointing out how the application of flat colour was once a significant aspect in miniature painting. Paintings by Irfan Hasan are more realistic leaving behind the old ideas; offering a more accurate version of the surroundings as they appear to be. Indirectly they are representing the society in a naive approach. A renewed feeling came into the artist attaining splendor and priceless principles. This style is so fully distinguishing than the previous descriptions of miniature paintings and is capable of giving way to perception beyond imagination. It brings about sharp minds and an eagerness for knowledge.

Illustrations



Plate 1. Scream. By Irfan Hasan



Plate 2. Blue Salute By Irfan Hasan

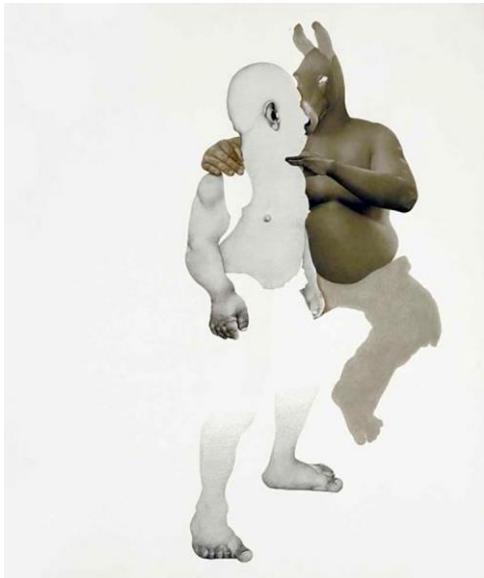


Plate 3. No Mercy. By Irfan Hasan



Plate 4. Mother and Child. By Irfan Hasan



Plate 5. Family. By Irfan Hasan

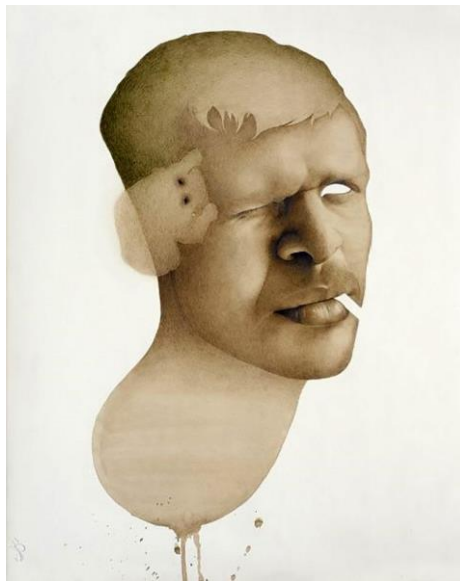


Plate 6. Me. By Irfan Hasan



Plate 7. Composition 1. By Irfan Hasan



Plate 8. His Highness 3. By Irfan Hasan