



Riffat Alvi, *Insane Humanity*, 2002, Natural earth, vegetable dye and porcelain birds, 24.75 x 36.75 x 2.75 inches

# The Works of Women



Rabia Zuberi, *Drapery Series*, 1986, Fiber Glass, 22 x 19 x 9.5 inches



Shazia Zuberi, *Markhor series-sculpture*, 2020, Stoneware clay mounted on wood and steel, 24 x 11.4 x 6.9 inches



Rabia Zuberi, Drapery Series, 1987, Fiber Glass  
17.5 x 11 x 8 inches



Rabia Zuberi, Design Motifs as Element of Sculpture, 1984  
Metal, 9 x 10 x 5 inches

VM Art Gallery recently announced in early December the opening of three solo exhibitions on titled Forms of Existence by Rabia Zuberi, A Call Upon the Earth by Riffat Alvi and We graze in the sun. We graze in squalor. We exist quietly by Shazia Zuberi.

These exhibitions paid homage to the art of sculpture and the women who contributed greatly to its progression in Pakistan.

### Forms of Existence

This exhibition showcased a curated selection of sculptural works by Rabia Zuberi covering her various series, such as, Inner feelings, Beauty of Human Form, Drapery series, Quest for Peace and Human Existence, produced throughout her art career.

Zuberi's work talks about the bonding between mother and child, realities and uncertainties of migration, importance of a dupatta in the Indo-Islamic culture and pursuit of peace amidst misery and chaos. Zuberi's work also looks at the human form in depth. The elements of investigation are delicacy of texture, rhythmic beauty of posture, continuity of line and weight.

An eminent sculptor, art educator and thinker, Rabia Zuberi is a pioneering figure of Pakistan's art community. Having been educated at the Aligarh Muslim University and Lucknow College of Arts and Craft, Zuberi along with her sister Hajra, migrated to Pakistan and joined her parents in Karachi in 1963.

Her greatest contribution to art is the establishment of the first art school in Karachi. Along with her sister Hajra Masur and Mansur Rahi, Zuberi founded the Karachi School of Art in 1964, which continues to flourish to date.

Looking at design as a component of sculpture, Zuberi has communicated her thoughts through different forms. Her work has a variety of both, figurative and abstract art. Human anatomy has been a persistent area of exploration throughout her entire oeuvre.

Zuberi has remained the recipient of numerous awards throughout her life. She received multiple art awards at the National Youth Art Exhibitions held in Calcutta and New Dehli in the early 1960s. Other than this, her artistic excellence was recognized and awarded at the 7th National Art Exhibition in 1996. Zuberi was bestowed Lifetime Achievement Award by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in 2003.

## A Call Upon the Earth

Her work investigates the limitations and possibilities of the medium, clay. Using natural interventions and configurations by the medium, Alvi's work takes an organic form. Moreover, the inclusion of different types of sand, gravel and twigs, delineates Alvi's relationship with nature.

Riffat Alvi is a Karachi-based artist, curator and educator. Having graduated from the Karachi School of Arts in 1973, her art practice spans over a period of four decades. With an aim to bring international art and artists to Karachi and promote emerging artists, Alvi has served as the director of the VM Art Gallery from its inception in 1987 up until 2018.

Producing work in a variety of mediums, Alvi is internationally renowned for her work in ceramics and use of earth pigment technique that she discovered in Africa. Most of her work has been created using natural pigments, clay and twigs, which she sourced from all over Pakistan. Alvi's work has been showcased at distinguished institutions, embassies and galleries in Pakistan, as well as abroad such as, in Germany, UK, Italy France, Iran, Nepal and Zimbabwe.

## We graze in the sun. We graze in squalor. We exist quietly

In her work, the artist Shazia Zuberi has used markhor, Pakistan's national animal as a symbol to represent the citizens of Pakistan. Through her work, she presents a notion of linking the likeness of behaviour of Pakistanis with that of a markhor. The work stresses upon the need to maintain a fine balance between nature and communal human needs.

Shazia Zuberi has been an active clay artist since the late 90s. Schooled in the United States, Pennsylvania, she did her Bachelor of Arts in economics with a minor in studio arts from the Allegheny College. Zuberi has done her Masters from SOAS, UK in Gender Studies.

Zuberi has over the years developed a language in art that reflects the natural, organic form – paying a tribute to geology and landscape. Her work aims to tell a story by documenting nature through which she safeguards the purity and essence of clay, her chosen medium. Zuberi's work is heavily dependent on the use of natural oxides and techniques that complement the natural world and pay a tribute to our environment. Both her clays and glazes are handmade.



Riffat Alvi, Open wounds, 2003, Natural earth, 18.25 x 13.75 inches



Shazia Zuberi, Head-sculpture, 2019, Earthenware clay mounted on wood and steel, 15 x 11.9 x 6.9 inches