

# BIG ART

The art, artists and everything in between.

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## DISSENSUS



Khadim Ali

Analogies are drawn from mythologies. Histories repeat within current affairs. Hegemonic destructions are widespread, but today dissent is the new crop, cultivated through speech and expression. The voice of dissent cries out, is heard, is ostracized. The voice resurfaces, is exiled, yet echoes variously disguised to avoid execution: ventriloquism comes into play. Distress varies at degrees, with reasons: natural calamities, wars, religious-ethnic conflicts, political disharmonies, social injustice; the rendering invisible of identities is like the shrouding of the dead where identities go unidentified. Surveillance and censorship become the everyday. Dissensus brings together the voices of six such artists coming from within the political configuration of five such countries, who speak for communities under the veil of political dictums governing each in situations alike. Complex works of art expressed through the allegorical, drawing from mythologies, histories, philosophies, literature, poetry, religion and the miniature painting style, illustrate the intrusive and unjust policies supervising the collective.

Investigating emotions behind the veil, Neda Tavallaee Works with cyanotypes, superimposing the photographic image of a model. The 11th century epic Shahnameh in the miniature painting appears as a pictorial backdrop to mark the absence of the gallant heroes of history in today's context. The body of the woman remains a taboo, a fascination to be hidden behind the veil, "symbolic of Hawa (Eve in Islam) who has to solve all her problems by herself and seek justice alone."



Hitman Gurung

Nepal-based Hit Man Gurung voices his concerns over the disrupted social order since the recent earthquake that cremated entire landscapes and relationships. Though the earthquake was a temporary event, the changing climatic conditions continue to destroy and kill individuals through disease, lack of hygiene, sanitation, and food. The many displaced live in makeshift homes or in the open. "We are at war without enemies," says Gurung. The government may have raised funds for relief and rebuilding, but the pace of recuperation and compensation is too slow. The artist's large digital canvas is an assemblage of innumerable monochromatic images, photographed in the aftermath of the earthquake. The meta-narrative with the central image of an individual with a bandaged head holding up a coloured image against the otherwise grey composition draws nostalgia for a lost livelihood, a colourful past as opposed to the current situation. It is an ode to the survivors devoid of their beloveds, their homes, and lands.



Veer Munshi

Veer Munshi from Kashmir asks: “Why war? What is war? What causes war? What is the relationship between human nature and war? Can war ever be morally justifiable?” only to realize the complexity of the situation lies in diverse issues, from the social, moral, political, philosophical through to the metaphysical. His take on the ongoing wars is demonstrated with ornate velvet burial caskets cradling skeletal remains within. The decayed body is symbolic of ‘Relics from Lost Paradise’. These bones are modelled from papier-mâché referencing local Kashmiri craftsmanship that was historically inherited from Persia. The intricately painted paisley patterns are a poignant contrast. The ornamented bones could be that of the perpetrators or the victim, soldier or civilian but all that remains of the war are a displaced collection of bones, encased within coffins.



Waseem Ahmed

Waseem Ahmed was born in the Sindh province of Hyderabad and is currently living in Lahore, Pakistan. He traces changing relationships and situations through his work. Referencing images from the past to use in his work, he observes: “Only names have changed but stories of war and conflicts remain the same.” The ambiguous figure of the mullah-sometimes wearing a bombshell vest, is converted into a motif, recurring in his series of works as the demonized figure, who evokes and emboldens the religiosity he proliferates. Yet he avoids pinpointing the source of violence because in fact violence is not what erupts from specific bodies, instead it is what is contained within everybody.

Another artist referencing Ferdowsi’s Persian epic Shahnameh is Khadim Ali of Quetta. He conveys how the numerous heroes and even the bravest of them, Rustom’s fate was failure and defeat. Ali’s works illustrate how contemporary violence coincides with the tales of the Shahnameh, posing the question, did it anticipate a future of bloodshed? “The Islamic world today, just as the Persian world, is drowning in the ‘killing(s) of future.’ A brutal past is destroying the heart of the present,” he says. His paintings borrow from the traditional Persian miniature style, with the stock image of the protagonists recurring at various situations. The protagonists are meant to symbolize a universal person.



Priyanka D’Souza  
*Untitled* (Watercolour and pencil on paper; 2016)

Priyanka D’Souza from Mumbai is this year’s emerging artist, supported by Galley Latitude 28. Through her years in Baroda, she has observed the changing political sensibilities affecting the milieu. Primarily using the technique of traditional miniature paintings, she explores surfaces, geometric abstraction and uses various materials, scraps, found objects and the Nastaliq script to string a variety of themes under the pressing concerns of the social, environmental and the political. She questions the relevance of traditionally Imperial miniatures in the present context of white-cube spaces. Priyanka composed her wall series in response to Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee’s poem *No Urdu in Dilli, Mian*. Architectural elements take on various degrees of political connotations, where abstraction, surface texture, miniature painting aesthetics and script, incorporated with immediate objects, subtly critique the insidious proceedings in today’s world against the marginalized.

Images: ©Latitude 28

**Where:** Opens at Bikaner House and continues at Latitude 28, New Delhi  
**When:** On view from 7<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017