

SADEQUAIN

Born 1930, Amroha, India
Died 1987, Karachi, Pakistan

B.A. in Art History and Geography, Agra University (1948)

Syed Sadequain Ahmed Naqvi was one of the first Pakistani artists to gain international recognition, embarking on his notable career with an award from the Biennale de Paris in 1961. The artist was born in Amroha, India, descending from a family of Qur'an scribes and is recognized as the foremost calligrapher and painter of Pakistan, responsible for the renaissance of Islamic calligraphy in the country since the late 1960s and bringing the art form into the mainstream. In the late 1940s, Sadequain joined the Progressive Writers and Artists Movement and through his career, produced works of thematic content reflected by his commitment to social justice, and the progressive ideals of his peers of writers and poets. On the eve of Partition, Sadequain painted anti-British, nationalistic slogans in Dehli and such politically charged works gained the artist a wider, responsive audience both abroad and in Pakistan among the 1960s intelligentsia.

Sadequain's unique visual vocabulary stemmed from the complex merging of Eastern (calligraphy) and Western (figurative) traditions in art, alongside Hindu and Muslim ideology. Sweeps of a calligraphic brush are echoed in the artist's flamboyant approach to painting figures but his forms and themes are mostly biographical. Contortions to figurative style arose from his observation of wild, defiant cacti growing against the odds in the deserts of Gadani (Karachi) which left an indelible impression on the artist and his work. Colors used are simplistic, yet provide strong structural elements through Sadequain's contrast of etched strokes.

In terms of Sadequain's work in calligraphy, outside of Quranic verses, the artist's affinity to literature resulted in works illustrating the classical poetry of Iqbal, Ghalib and Faiz. With the support of state patronage, Sadequain completed many celebrated commissions, notably the ceiling of Lahore Museum and the ambitious mural "The Treasures of Time" for the State Bank of Pakistan, depicting the evolution of mankind and tracing the history of great intellectuals. Other commissions include The Power House at the Mangla Dam, Geological Institute of India, Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University. In 2003, a retrospective entitled "The Holy Sinner: Sadequain" was exhibited at the Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi.

Sadequain died on February 10, 1987 in Karachi at the age of 57.

Select Solo Exhibitions

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| 2015 | Sadequain Exaltations: Featuring Works from the Lost Exhibition, Aicon Gallery, New York |
| 2014 | Sadequain A Retrospective: Including Works from The Lost Exhibition, Aicon Gallery, New York |
| 1981 | International Trade Fair, New Delhi
Indian Council for Cultural Relations at State Lalit Kala Academy, Rabindra Bhawan, New Delhi |
| 1971-72 | Exposition of calligraphies that lasted eight months at Lahore Museum
Exposition of paintings based on Ghalib's poetry at Lahore Museum |
| 1970 | Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi
Liaquat Memorial Hall, Rawalpindi |
| 1966 | Retrospective Exhibition of 300 paintings at the Banking Hall of the State Bank Headquarters, Karachi |

- Exhibition on Lloyd Triestino's ship "Victoria" while crossing the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic Sea
 Exhibition of drawings at Hotel Intercontinental Karachi.
 1963 Henry Gallery, Washington
 1962 Galerie Lambert, Paris
 Karachi at Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy's residence in Clifton
 Exhibition at the Town Hall in Quetta
 Held numerous one-man exhibitions at Quetta Residency

Select Group Exhibitions

- 2010 Figure/Landscape – Part One & Two, Aicon Gallery, New York
 1986 Exhibition of calligraphies at Frere Hall
 1985 Anjuman-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha in Karachi, Pakistan
 Exhibition of calligraphies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 1982 Kennedy Hall, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
 Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
 Urdu Ghar, Hyderabad
 Exhibition of calligraphies and drawings, State Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow, India
 Exhibition of calligraphies at Ghalib Academy, New Delhi
 1974 Lahore Museum; Islamabad at PNCA; Karachi Arts Council; Municipal Library Hall, Dubai; Main Hall, Hilton Hotel, Abu Dhabi; Markazul Funoon, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; National Museum of Damascus, Syria; Hall of Jordan Intercontinental, Amman, Jordan; Art Gallery of Kuwait City, Kuwait; Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad
 1969 Arts Council Building, Karachi
 1966 Exhibition sponsored by Automobile Club of France, Place de la Concorde, Paris
 1965 Several exhibitions in France including Nouran Havre, Palais de la Mediterranean, Chateau-Musee Annecy, Musee Casino Dieppe, Casino de Charbonnieres, and Musee Macon
 Arts Council Gallery, Karachi; Alhamra, Lahore
 1964 Galerie Presboug, Paris
 1963 Commonwealth Institute Galleries, London
 N.V.C. Gallery, London
 5th Salon of the "Young and Great Artists," Museum of Modern Art, Paris

Awards

- 1982 International Gold Mercury Award
 1980 Government of Pakistan, Sitara-e-Imtiaz
 1975 Government of Australia, Cultural Award
 1962 President of Pakistan, President's Medal of Honor for Pride of Performance
 1961 Government of France, Biennale de Paris
 1960 Government of Pakistan, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz and First Prize in the All Pakistan National Exhibition of Paintings

Commissions & Murals

- 1982 Designed calligraphy of Aligarh Muslim University's logo for Moulana Azad Library
 Executed a mural, "Quest for Reality," for Banaras Hindu University
 Executed five-story circular calligraphy based on "Asma-e-Husna" for Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, New Delhi
 1981 Inauguration of Galerie Sadequain in Islamabad
 1978-9 Published book of poetry with illustrations, working mostly on calligraphic work
 1972 Executed "Sura-e-Yasin," 260 feet long on wooden panels for the Islamic Gallery in
 Lahore Museum and donated it to the museum
 1970 Published privately First Edition of the Rubaiyyat-e-Sadequain Naqqash

- 1968 Executed the mural "Quest for Knowledge II" for the library of the Punjab University
Executed two murals for Auditorium of Punjab Univ., "Confrontation" & "Triumph"
- 1967 Executed a mural "Saga of Labor" at Mangla Dam Power House
Executed a Mural "Light of the Book" in the Punjab Public Library
- 1966 Executed a mural in Lausanne, Switzerland entitled "Pakistan" in the Pakistan Pavilion in the Swiss Fair - later exhibited in New York, Tokyo and Toronto, Canada
Executed a mural "Flight" in the PIA Office at Paris
- 1965 Executed a mural "War and Peace" at Karachi
- 1964 Selected to do color lithographs for a special publication of the novel by Albert Camus, "L' Étranger (The Stranger)" published by the Automobile Club of France.
- 1962 Permanent display at Galerie Mona Lisa, Paris
- 1959 Executed a mural "Quest for Knowledge" at the Services Club in Karachi
Executed a mural for the Committee Room at Mangla Dam on Dignity of Labor
- 1955 Executed two murals in Jinnah Central Hospital Karachi War #5