

reviewed by NILOFUR FARRUKH

Narratives of the Second Millennium

Journeys of the Spirit by art critic Salwat Ali is an anthology of her reviews from various dailies, monthlies and monographs since 2000. The author is not new to the art audience with her prolific career in art writing. She has also authored a biography of the prominent woman modernist Laila Shahzada which was published in 2007.

In the words of the author much is owed to Jalaluddin Ahmed and Azra Jalal for their vision as 'they had the eye to perceive a full bodied volume in a motley collection of art reviews. . .'

Journeys of the Spirit is an informative and sumptuously illustrated book with a reader-friendly design that chronicles the city's recent art events through the lens of the art critic.

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The contents have been structured into 12 categories. The book commences with cutting edge contemporary art in which a new language and radial content confirm innovation as the driving force. It's a balanced compilation, for it takes into account the pluralistic nature of art in Pakistan. After the first section which goes under the heading New Age Art others that follow are Contemporary Miniature, Abstraction, Figurative Art, Culture, Mega Exhibitions, Ceramics, Printmaking, Calligraphy, Art Publications and In Memoriam.

TITLE: *Journeys of the Spirit, Pakistan Art in the New Millennium*

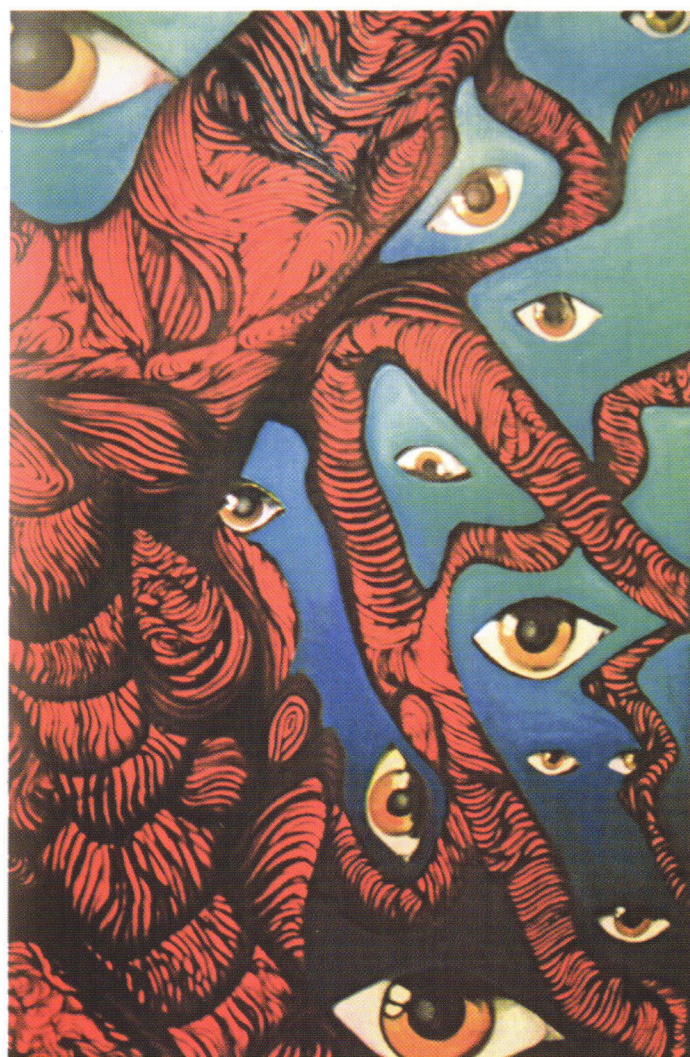
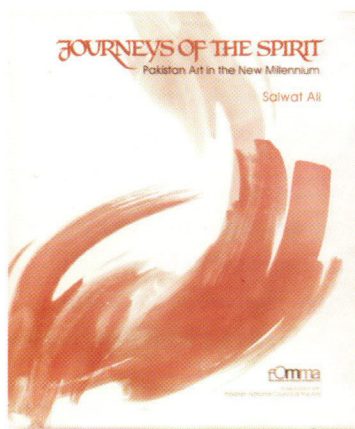
AUTHOR: Salwat Ali

PUBLISHER: FOMMA and PNCA

PAGES: 345

PRICE: Pak Rs 1500 / US \$35 (including shipping)

ISBN 969 8896 03-1



Nazia Akram
Inner Sanctum

2005



Waseem Ahmed
Krishna Series

At a time when the boundaries between genres have collapsed under 'Visual Arts' one cannot help but wonder why such a need was felt to pigeonhole a free flowing energy like art. Many of the sections could have been easily merged as art frequently crosses and appropriates in a way that challenges classification, particularly in this millennium, to which the book is dedicated.

The place given to ceramics and art publications is indicative of their substantive presence on the scene. Another point to ponder is that an increase in sculpture shows in recent years is not seen to merit a separate section like photography and ceramics.

What one enjoys throughout the book is the art selected for reproduction. Its vibrant richness supports the text. Two works that need a special mention are Colin David's *Nude of Spades* and a rare Ali Kazim with a composition of a woman in it. The images in *In Memoriam* brings back memories of shows held as far back as half a decade. This is the only section in which Salwat Ali has included another writer's piece, one on Ozzir Zuby by Iqbal Shanasai.

The strength of the book is its documentation brought together through a mammoth task of tracing and putting together the texts scattered in the print media. Without doubt its 345 pages publication will be invaluable for future researchers. However, what could have furthered the national art discourse is an insightful conclusion by Salwat Ali informing the reader on her perception of the qualitative developments and the influential factors that have radically expanded the practice, marketing and discussion on arts from Pakistan—at home and abroad—in this century.

Farwa Tahir
Thesis project

