

Past Traditions/Present Discourses

South Asian Pre-Modern Works of Art & Muhammed Zeeshan

Aicon Gallery, New York, is delighted to present Past Traditions/Present Discourses, a unique and exciting show featuring a stunning collection of pre-modern Indian sculpture and miniature paintings alongside a series of striking new work from Muhammed Zeeshan, one of Pakistan's most widely acclaimed contemporary neo-miniaturist painters. The exhibition is curated by Aicon New York's recently appointed director Theresa McCullough, previously a Director of Sotheby's Indian and Southeast Asian Dept., and coincides with Asian Art Week and Asian Contemporary Art Week.

22 March 2011 – 16 April 2011

VIP Preview: Tuesday March 22, 6pm – 7:30pm

General Reception: Tuesday March 22, 7:30pm – 9:00pm

Sculpture Highlights: The sculpture collection ranges in date from 2nd/3rd century AD Gandhara (present day Pakistan and Afghanistan) to 18th century Karnataka in Southern India. Highlights include a standing figure of a Bodhisattva, **Gandhara**, 2nd/3rd century, schist, height: 20 in., from a 1930's American collection, a classic example of the Buddhist Graeco-Roman influenced sculpture from this region. A **Door Jamb Depicting the Goddess Yamuna**, Northern India, Uttar Pradesh, Kausambi, 9th/10th century, sandstone, height: 67 in., from a private New York Collection. The river goddess represents ceremonial cleansing upon entering the temple. Also a delightful figure of **Saint Sambandar**, Southern India, from the ever popular **Chola Period**, 12th century, copper alloy, height: 15 in., again from a private New York Collection (see image). The child saint points towards Mount Kailash, in the Himalayas, after being miraculously fed a bowl of milk by Parvati, and, in a show of gratitude, vows to compose hymns to Shiva for the rest of his life. **Miniature Painting Highlights:** The miniature paintings date from 17th to 19th century and include scenes from the great epic poems such as the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana, and highlights include Five **Illustrations to the Ramayana**, Northern India, Rajasthan, Udaipur, Mewar School, circa 1710. They are a charming set of pages from a series depicting the exploits of Rama, and other pages from this same series can be found in American museum collections. Also a Battle Scene from **The Mahabharata: The Battle Between Karna and Pradyumna**, Northern India, Garhwal, circa 1800, from The Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck Collection.



Saint Sambandar, Southern India, Chola Period, 12th century, Copper alloy, Height: 15 in.

In conjunction with the pre-modern exhibition, we are delighted to present a set of new works by contemporary artist **Muhammed Zeeshan**. The selection of paintings entitled "Special *Siri* Series" are linked by recurring motifs of severed human, animal and bird heads, predominantly placed against a monochrome background. The violent underpinnings of the images speak to the current political climate in Pakistan as well as the religious and social upheaval which has engulfed the country over the last decade. Executed in the style of traditional miniature painting, and also using a laser score machine to 'draw' with a burnt line (see image), the works are comprised of fine lines and exquisite detail with every element meticulously defined. The rich, natural dye monochrome background on some of the works has been created by twenty-five layers of opaque wash, lending the works an unusual strength of color emulating the brilliantly opaque palette of Mughal miniatures. Emanating from the National College of Arts in Lahore during the 1980's, this renewal in miniaturist tradition has culminated most significantly in the recent wave of Pakistani artists credited with revolutionizing the centuries-old practice. By appropriating these ancient techniques for use in their work, Zeeshan and others have put the familiar elements of their artistic heritage to work in addressing the modern issues facing Pakistan today. As a testament to his success, Zeeshan, together with Imran Qureshi, has achieved international acclaim and was notably included in the British Museum's 2009 exhibition "Safavids Revisited". He is in part responsible for the indigenous tradition living on in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Catalogue available upon request.



Muhammad Zeeshan, Special Siri Series 01, (2011), Gouache and laser score on wasli, Dimensions: 26 x 20 in.

For more information or additional images please contact Theresa McCullough at Aicon Gallery: 646.205.2709 or via email at Theresa@aicongallery.com Please visit our website for full details on the works: www.aicongallery.com