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Pakistani artist Zeeshan Muhammad

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It feels like a colour burst when Pakistani artist Zeeshan Muhammad wearing a ponytail walks inside Kalakriti Art Gallery. His red polka-dot shirt, in contrast to his blue trousers, lends a quirky angle. He explains his love for colour. “My wife is a television actress and she buys a lot of clothes. I use the clothes left behind by her for my shirts and I have a huge collection of them. Here in Hyderabad, my wife bought a lot of saris and I too bought material for shirts. *I like colour in my paintings and clothes but I like to collect works which are minimal and in monochrome,*” he smiles. Zeeshan was in the city for an interactive Talk and Video presentation session with fine art students of Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University and Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication.

Critically-acclaimed artist, Zeeshan is currently an adjunct faculty of Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi. He enjoys interacting with art students of the sub-continent, he says, adding “I have been teaching for the past 13 years but I enjoy giving presentations in Pakistan or India. The culture is more or less the same and I share my experiences. I come from a small town called Mirpukhaas and was 11 when I started working in a painter shop. When I narrate this to students of Pakistan or India, they understand it easily and relate to it too. Whereas, in USA or UK, it is a different phenomena where one question leads to another,” he shares.

Zeeshan came to India in 2005 when he was invited for an artist’s camp. He recalls how the trip helped him develop a strong bond with artist Manisha Gera Baswani and her husband Rahul Gera Baswani. “I was running high fever and the antibiotics made me nauseous. Rahul and Manisha saw my condition and understood that I couldn’t even buy the nimbu paani. Instead of giving me money, they bought one of my paintings and later mentioned my name to Mamta Singhania of Anant Art gallery. The painting became a bridge for me to get work and my fever was responsible for it. I always tell students it is not just events which are important in one’s life. Equally significant are the circumstances surrounding it. These events were life-changing for me.”

Zeeshan believes that the art scene in Pakistan is undergoing changes at different levels. “The art scene is not big but it is good. There are many new galleries, collectors and writers who are impressive. The good part is there are artists who create traditional paintings and those who are experimental, and create video or performance-based works. There is a change in the visual vocabulary and luckily artists are creating new themes,” he says.

The artist had also created a work inspired by Vidya Balan in The Dirty Picture. He watched the film continuously for eight days before creating a work which shows Vidya posing in the form of a Nataraja. In fact he is also a big fan of Hindi movies. “There are only a few Bollywood movies which I have not watched. I remember I was 9 when Madhuri Dixit’s Tezaab was to be released. Two days

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As an artist how does he react to statements about Pakistan and terrorism? "I have travelled to India and to other countries. I believe a scientist will talk to another scientist, a politician will speak to another politician and as an artist I will like to see more art and speak to other artists. I teach, curate and also paint and like to take my work out of such events," he says and adds, "The only thing I am interested in is to know which movie is releasing and when. And, if it is not releasing, when will I get the soft print."

Keywords: [Zeeshan Muhammad](#), [Pakistani art scene](#),

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