

MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN

Born and based in Pakistan, **MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN**'s intricate miniature drawings of South-East Asian royalty might lead you to believe that the artist is concerned primarily with his country's past.

These laser-cut works represent a grappling, however, with a seductive and pervasive violent power manifesting itself in the country's politics. Text by **MOLLY TAYLOR**.

Your process involves creating the tools that you need to make your work, for instance your 'burning pen' and a special type of paper. Can you tell us a bit about this?

I use wasli, a seven-layered handmade paper glued together with laee (a glue that I make from flour), as my surface. The 'burning pen' is a laser-cutting machine—a popular tool in product design. I wanted to draw with laser when I first came across it in San Francisco, but for that to be achieved I had to manually control the laser's speed and intensity so it only marks the paper's surface rather than cutting into it. Once I had achieved the desired effect the possibilities were endless. I've started to juxtapose the fragility of the laser-scored lines with the sensitivity of the miniature strokes.

There seems to be a contradiction between the creation of these things and their destruction via your various processes—e.g. burning into the paper. Is this intentional?

It is the blankness and the silence of the paper that I break by digging into its surface. Sometimes I burn/score the paper so that the laser goes as deep as the third layer; sometimes it passes through completely. The process is more sculptural than destructive.

Do miniatures have a cultural or personal significance for you?

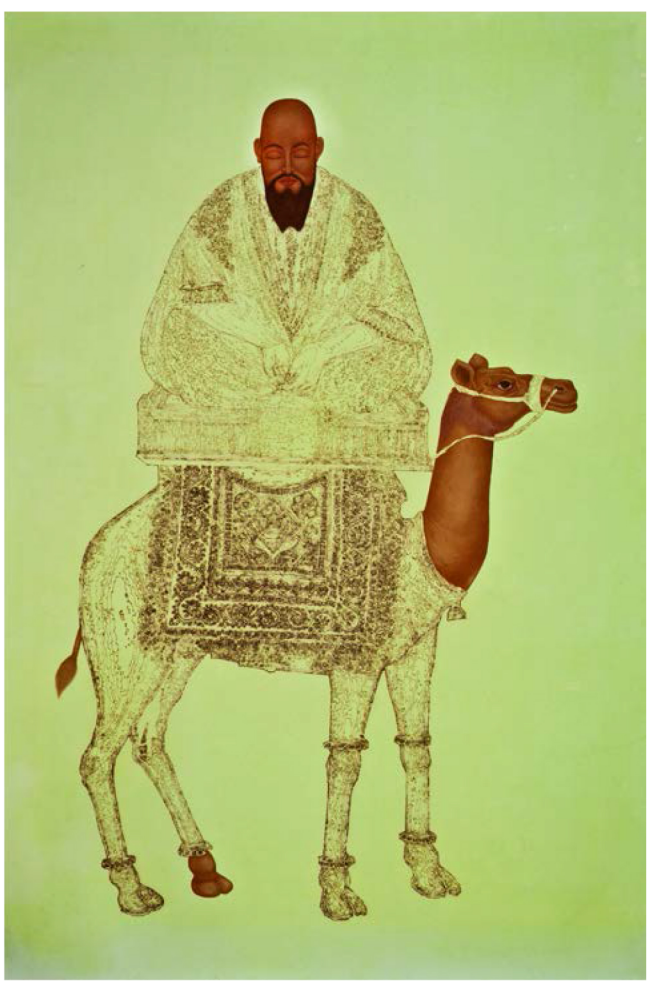
Miniatures connect culturally to my religion and myself: they are illustrations, or documentations, of the kings and queens who have ruled South-East Asia. The images allow us to understand the lifestyle these people had, how they behaved, what was important to them.

Occasionally, a gaudy Pop image (like an open, hypersexual mouth) will appear to great effect in your work.

I have been greatly inspired by Tom Wesselmann's Pop imagery. I feel his works are sensuous and attractive in just the right way. I have used his famous painting *The Great American Nude #92* variously in my works. Sometimes I have borrowed the complete figure and at other times just the beautiful full red lips. Again, the image is juxtaposed with another apparently random image, but there is a conversation flowing which one needs to stop and listen to.

Muhammad Zeeshan's solo show at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, runs from 12 June–11 July





Previous page
Special Siri Series, 2011
 Gouache and laser scoring
 on wasli
 66 x 51 cm

Above left
Sailani Baba, 2014
 Gouache and laser scoring
 on wasli
 142 x 96.5 cm

Above right
Pyar Ka Khuda, 2014
 Gouache and laser scoring
 on wasli
 142 x 96 cm

Opposite
Maa (series), 2014
 Gouache and laser scoring
 on wasli
 142 x 97.75 cm

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KRISTIN HJELLEGERDE GALLERY

