

Maimuna Art

Introducing myself

I was born in the fierce desert of Sind in Pakistan. My Father was a judge, my Mother of Georgian-English descent, a writer and linguist. We were sent to strict Catholic Convent Schools where the Franciscan nuns believed that Chapel, prayers, modest dress and behaviour, and embroidery were more suitable for (Muslim) girls than mathematics geography or chemistry!

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In this state of innocence I was sent to the Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, India where I was fortunate enough to meet close collaborators of Gandhi and other freedom fighters for Indian independence. I also attended the lectures of the well known philosopher Krishnamurti who has been a life long inspiration.

The Pakistan of our childhood was a broad minded, multicultural, multi-religious society where Catholics (the nuns and priest), Protestant (my maternal Grandmother), Zoroastrians (my paternal Grandmother), Hindus (our governess), Buddhists, Muslims lived and worked peacefully together.

War broke out between India and Pakistan, so I was sent to my English Grandmother in Birmingham. For 4 years I was at the Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts majoring in Painting and Fine Arts, with embroidery, French, German and Italian as secondary projects.

I won a 1 year scholarship to study painting at the Brera Academy in Milan, Italy and have lived here ever since.

I stopped painting to raise my 3 children but as soon as soon as they were independent I returned to the Academy and have stayed on ever since! Painting and etching have been my main focus. I have always refused to exhibit while waiting and working in order to find my "truth-full" voice.

Around 5 years ago I stopped painting altogether and went to our isolated country home in Umbria to spend long periods alone gardening, writing, reading in depth about my past, my culture, about Islamic, Christian, Buddhist mysticism and especially the works of medieval women mystics.

These sculptures are the results, as I feel I've found enough of my voice to come out into the world. They are made of old sheets, ironing-board covers, pillow-cases, decorated with any material, metal or plastic I find on my walks in Milan, Umbria and Luxor. Embroidered, darned like St. Francis' robes in Assisi, they are stuffed with wool (the word

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Sufi is derived from "Suf"= wool/pure. (The Sufi mystics dressed in woollen garments).

My work is based on two main themes.

Hands: a holy symbol in Islam with embroidered holy words, or mirrors, the mystic's search for mirroring the Absolute. They become minor symbols of consumerism and bondage in works like "Heineken".

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Figures: mostly of women from my family, those who worked in our homes and women I've known in the West who have been hurt by injustice, by society, religion, family and prejudices.

Bleeding, healing and waiting.