

The Intersection of Tradition and Modernity: Surrealist Aesthetics in Contemporary Pakistani Miniature Painting

Hisamuddin Mirani¹, Mariya Shaikh²

¹Lecturer, Institute of Art and Design, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan,
Email: hissamudddin@usindh.edu.pk

²Faculty - Textile Design Department, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan,
Email: mariya.shaikh@usindh.edu.pk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i4.1193>

Abstract

This research explores an innovative fusion of traditional miniature painting technique with contemporary imagery in surrealist aesthetics. The study inspects how Waliullah Mirani picture the power of the subconscious and fleeting moments to generate dreamlike landscape and surrealist imagery in traditional technique of painting. Through evaluating the imagery, symbolism and formal elements of paintings, the study seeks to uncover the underlying cultural and psychological meanings. The paper will also discuss the artistic skills, mainly the use of traditional techniques, form, feature, imagery, concept and context of a contemporary form of art in perspective to juggle a sense of wonder and fleeting moments. Ultimately this study aims to understand the contemporary Pakistani art and the appeal of surrealism as a means of exploring the complexity of human psyche.

Keywords: Pakistani Art, Contemporary Miniature Painting, Surrealism, Aesthetic, Waliullah Mirani, Dreamlike Imagery, Art History.

Introduction

The development of contemporary art in Pakistan has observed an intense dialogue between traditions and modernity, where artists frequently reproduce and reinterpret traditional art forms to articulate contemporary narratives and subjects. One of these, the miniature painting once bound to courtly aesthetics and historical manuscripts, has appeared as a vibrant site of experimentation. In recent time artists have extended the conventional boundaries of this medium, merging its certain techniques with modern themes, psychological and cultural discourses. Within this transformative curve, the surrealist aesthetic has become a convincing and appealing mode of expression, providing a visual language that probes the fleeting, unconscious and uncanny concepts and moments.

The paper examines how Waliullah Mirani restructure the miniature painting by combining the surrealist elements into its traditional art form. Surrealism, with its appeal for subconscious, dreams and irrationality resonates intensely with the contemporary search for inner meaning within fast shifting of cultural landscape. Mirani's paintings exemplify this fusion, portraying the settings and visuals that hover between imagination and reality, a window to the unspoken and the unseen. Through a critical analysis of his imagery, visual representation and formal attributes, this research intended to appreciate the cultural and psychological understandings of Mirani's practice. The study also highlights the important application of a traditional miniature technique not merely as an aesthetic choice, but could be as a deliberate medium for contemporary expression. Including this, study spots the artist's oeuvre within the broader discourse of surrealism and its reception in Pakistan. Ultimately this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of contemporary art work of Pakistan. It highlights how a centuries old art form and techniques can serve as a canvas for modern

anxieties, fleeting and dreamy visions, bringing the temporal gap between past craftsmanship and present consciousness.

Research Objectives

1. To explore how modern concepts and traditional techniques merge to develop a contemporary artistic expression in Pakistan.
2. To interpret the psychological and cultural meanings delivered through imagery, symbolism and formal elements.
3. To analyze the use of subconscious themes, dreamlike landscape and fleeting moments in the work of Waliullah.
4. To witness the traditional art work of Pakistan on contemporary parameters of art history documentation.

Methodology

In this research the qualitative approach is used, combining visual analysis with contextual and interpretive approaches as the primary method to examine the selected paintings of Waliullah Mirani. The selected art works are critically appreciated to distinguish their use of surrealist elements with traditional miniature technique, focusing on visual elements, visual representation, composition and visual treatment. This Formal and semiotic analysis help to interpret the psychological and cultural narratives presented in the art works. The relevant literature is also reviewed on surrealism and contemporary miniature painting in Pakistan to base the discussion and contextualize the findings.

Literature Review

Traditional miniature painting is known as the art of South Asia, and it is famous and practiced in Pakistan since 1947. Though its historical linkages are in all over the sub-continent, traced back from Mughal to Iran and Turkey (Dohadwala 2013). But it has grown up into a new genre in Pakistan with its own identity and aesthetic as Pakistani miniature painting art; a traditional miniature painting and the contemporary miniature painting as well. Contemporary miniature painting is also named as neo-miniature (Ataullah 2010), it is a new form of art in the region and getting rapid recognition and popularity in the international art world. The miniature painting as a technique is still keeps its own identity but from the perspective of imagery, it has evolved and experimented in different contemporary styles and also influenced by various art movements in its conceptual and visual perspective. There are few artists in Pakistan are working in contemporary style of miniature painting but having their own identical visual orientation and conceptual perspective; like Zahoor – ul – Ikhlauq, Imran Qureshi, Shazia Sikander, Waliullah Mirani and some other names.

Surrealism is a cultural and artistic movement during 1920s and 1930s in response of World War – I and its effects on human society in all perspectives particularly the psychological effects on public. This style attempts to challenge reality through illustrating and irrational and warped space filled with unusual and astonishing characteristics. This movement was also practiced in other kind of artistic expressions like, film, literature, theater and other forms of visual arts. Surrealism is a creative approach that mixes the aspects of irrationality, dreams and subconscious to develop a new universe that varies from the real world and experiences. By portraying a magical and nonpractical landscapes, that contradict the traditional understanding of reality. They tried to uncover the subconscious mind and to explore the human psyche by conveying deepest thoughts and desires without considering its practicality and existence (Ades 2001). After the tremendous inputs of Max Ernst¹ and Silverado Dali²

¹ Max Ernst (1891 – 1976) was a German artist and poet was primary pioneer of the Surrealism and Dada movements in Europe.

² Silverado Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dali I Domenech, Marquess of Dali of Pubol, (Silverado Dali) (1904 – 1989) A Spanish artist famous for his surrealist art works and for his draftsmanship, technical skills and for his striking and bizarre imagery.

has expand the purview of surrealism, that was associated with World War – I only. It became the approach to reveal dreams, subconscious and irrational thoughts, through a sense in a state of heightened sensibility and visualization (Ades 2001). Then it was adopted by the rest of world to do so. Likewise Waliullah Mirani has chosen to picture his fleeting thoughts through surrealist aesthetic, titled “Castle in the Sky”.

Waliullah Mirani is a miniature painter from a small village of Pano Akil, district Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan. He got his early education at his hometown Pano Akil. Then he has completed his Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA – Miniature Painting) degree from Centre of Excellence in Art and Design (CEAD), Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro, Sindh in 2013. He participated in different exhibition nationally, internationally and got good appreciation specially on his series “Castle in the Sky”. His father late Sikander Ali “Sajan” Mirani was a school teacher, poet, writer, a social and political activist. And there is a prominent influence of his father’s teachings and poetic nature on his thoughts and work. As a village boy his childhood memories and visual inspirations are predominated by nature countryside imagery, and portrayed as subject matter and as an art experience in detail. Waliullah’s statement about his series is:

“*Castle in the sky* a greatest property of dreams and imagination of childhood, that short-lived moments in flash, when a child amongst the conscious and unconscious, when he doesn’t spot the difference between reality and fantasy, when for just that one flash feel through his complete sentiments that the dream is reality and this actually happened. Reality and fantasy are interlinked, a child uses fantasy and imaginations to picture something, or possibly impersonate close in what way he could have done something in their own way in a specific state. Fantasy and imagination also communicates a understanding of wonder he will positively transfer through to maturity and as they want to be. I just attempted to use my ability of imaginations and sense of visualization of fantasy to make me feel creative and feel the fleeting moments.”

Castle in the Sky

Castle in the Sky is an art work in miniature technique conveying the fleeting moments of a child initiated from his subconscious mind in surrealist approach. A fusion of eastern painting technique narrating the imaginary ideas of subconscious mind in western style of imagery. At same time four different viewpoints to appreciate in the art works, one a miniature paintings itself a popular genre of eastern art associated with a region having some intended formal and conceptual characteristics, second is the conceptions tried to visualize by the artist are totally illusory and a psychological autopsy of human mind, third one is surrealist visual approach adopted by the artist a world famous approach of western world having its own identity in visual, media and gestures, fourth the attempt of the artist as a whole, a novel art product in admixture of three already popular products of their realms. So it is the onus of the study to appreciate this work of art in apporition to comprehend profusely. As Graeme Sullivan³ itemized it in his writing; Painters have always been deep thinkers. A characteristics of art practice shows that artists periodically think in a medium, think in a language, an think in a context (Sullivan 2008). Same Mirani has attempted to choose a different medium of an specific area and a distinctive roved imagery to narrate a complex context. So in this study there are three magnitudes to investigate the artwork as form and technique, artwork as imagery and subject matter, artwork as concept and context, and this will make us to understand the art work as whole “*Castle in the Sky*”.

³ Graeme Sullivan is an Australian, artist, art theorist, author and educator. He has contributed a lot of works and art events but he is world known for his international “Streetworks” project that plants public art in unusual urban locales.

Art Work as Form and Technique

Waliullah's work "Castle in the Sky" miniature paintings are the mixture of two already predominant art styles of art world; the Pakistani miniature painting and surrealism. Both art styles have their own character, not only in style of imagery but as a painting technique also. The Miniature painting is majorly famous as the art of Asian subcontinent generally and particularly in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Though it is a painting technique and treatment, but at same time due to its historical cradle, miniature painting has developed its sovereign identity as an art movement or style of art. In this series Waliullah has adopted the miniature painting as a painting technique and as an art skill or treatment with surrealist approach in visual making or in art form. Usually the miniature painting is used to narrate the folk heritage in Pakistan, it is named as traditional miniature painting. Traditional miniature paintings are small in size, multicolored, complex and horizontal visual treatment, overlooked perspective, carefully accomplished with slight brush strokes with self-made water base pigments on self-made surface *Vasli*. But through the passage of time as like other art styles miniature painting is also sprouted and partially changed or altered its characteristics specially the visual treatment, use of imagery and size of painting. But the miniature artists are still sturdy to maintained the originality of technique and style. This extension of miniature painting commonly named as contemporary miniature painting or neo-miniature painting.

Waliullah has adopted the contemporary style of miniature painting. There are variety in size, he has experienced the different sizes of paintings in same series. Though the mix medium has been explored in his works, he still capture the Pakistani sensibilities as their art ancestors but in a broadly and in modern approach. Specially the brush stroke treatment and the textures appearance (Figure 2 & 3). In the painting work artist has used the ballpoint pen for rendering and shading process with same detailed and minute treatment of miniature technique painting (Figure 1). The application of ballpoint pen as a medium of miniature painting to narrate a surrealist concept in this series generally and particularly in the painting *Castle in the Sky 01* (Figure 1) is executed dexterously. The application of said skill and treatment of medium is the key dexterity of Waliullah Mirani, he retained the character of two different genres from the perspective of technique, he has maintained the minuteness and feather-light strokes *Pardokht*⁴ of the miniature rendering style with ballpoint pen an irregular medium of miniature painting, at same time he has drafted a visual impression of *Frottage*⁵ method used in surrealism as a rendering and shading technique to erect the exclusive feel of surrealist aesthetic. In the painting the boy figure particularly and other visual elements generally sketched with blue ball point are created with minor details presenting the miniature painting style technique and the texture of a jute in figure rendering is exhibiting the a visual texture treatment generally applied in the aesthetic of surrealism. The same approach can be viewed in other paintings a little or a lot, like in painting *Castle in the sky 02* (Figure 2) the child face is painted in *Gouache*⁶ technique of miniature with same approach of surrealism. The making of painting backgrounds and its execution is also a fusion of miniature technique and surrealist aesthetics. The background of a miniature painting named as the wash, tea wash and water color wash usually practiced in miniature painting to make the painting background or the base or the 1st layer of different methods of miniature painting like, *Siyah Kalam*, *Gadrang*, *Gouache* etc. But in this series the washes are used as the painting backgrounds

⁴ Pardokht is a rendering and shading technique in miniature painting or feather-light brush strokes specially in miniature style and sometime as like pointillism.

⁵ A drawing and rendering technique developed by Max Ernst in 1925, and has become popular as a technique to create a visual of surrealism.

⁶ Gouache is a miniature painting technique of water base pigments, majorly practiced in traditional miniature.

executed with traditional miniature style presenting the impression of *Fumage*⁷ another technique of rendering and shading in surrealism paintings (Figure 1, 2 & 3).

Art Work as Imagery and Subject Matter

The intersection of traditional painting technique and contemporary approach in art form has given an gradient to innovative and captivating work of art. Waliullah has really pushed the borderlines of traditional genre through the incorporation of surrealist approach in his imagery. It is really difficult to artifact the fleeting moment and dreamy thoughts in the loom of realism or the subject matter from nature. A subject matter is considered as the literal meaning of an art work the visuals through an artist used to narrate his content or main concept, in simple the idea or information is contained in a painting (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2015). And imagery how artist has executed the subject matter to portray or to get the real essence of feelings and emotions or the notion is presented in his artwork. And Waliullah has utilized the very common subject matter from a daily village life of his area and skillfully executed it as dreamlike imagery and a precise symbolic language to generate a captivating and unique visual language. The subject matter of the paintings is majorly representational; recognizable and picked from the nature and real world, included the Human figure, portraits, plants, flowers, insects, animals, the stuffs from daily life. These visuals are the pure symbols of the argument adopted from the village life particularly in childhoods and painted in the psychic *automatism*⁸ and *juxtaposition*⁹ modes to achieve the real sensation of the fleeting moments. And this automatic and juxtaposition painting methods provide the dreamy guise in the paintings, enhance the inimitability of Waliullah's work in contemporary miniature with semblance of surrealist aesthetic.

Though the complete series is full of these qualities but here the first three paintings are selected as a sample to appreciate the artworks to comprehend the subject matter, the style and development of imagery used in painting series. In these paintings the making of the visuals are derived from the subconscious of a child; this proves the worth of research level and the emotional connectivity of the artist to the events and concept he has framed in the artworks. The 1st painting *Castle in the Sky 01* (Figure 1); As a traditional and intricate style of painting characterized by highly detailed and finely executed artwork on a small scale. This art work is detailed visual experimental work that catch the viewers' attention and have strong artistic skills and good sense of conceptual and visually content. The selection of visuals and skill testament created intricate, visually stunning work of art on a small scale. The miniature as a painting technique has a rich historical background in Pakistan even before partition specially from Mughal Period. As for as the art work is concerned this includes in contemporary miniature style in which the artists used to break the traditional and conventionalized approach in any perspective i.e. concept, size, medium or treatment. The ballpoint pen medium has applied on traditional surface known as *Vasli* in surrealist aesthetic, just to convey the real feel of concept; *Castle in the Sky* the imaginations with inventiveness of the childhood time. Inventiveness as artist has tried to visualize the instinct feelings and association of a villager child through the chattels like, broken cot, *Khata or Charpai*, stool, *Sandli*¹⁰ and jute, *Wanu* weaved child figure, and a blur image of child as the symbol of dreamy space. The subcontinent miniature commonly depict intricate scenes from their literature, history and mythological stories and court life. Likewise in modern approach the story concept has been visualized by the artist.

⁷ A drawing and rendering technique of painting in surrealism developed by Wolfgang Paalen. In this technique usually the artists are using the smoke to create the visual impression.

⁸ This is a drawing or painting method of surrealism art in which the artist softens conscious control in art making process, and allows the unconscious mind to drive the creation. This method was popular in 1920, and initiated by Andre Masson and Hans Arp.

⁹ Juxtaposition is a method of art making through placing the fragments or unrelated elements atop one another or side by side to make an visual effect of illusion, comparison or contrast.

¹⁰ A small wooden stool commonly used in villages for sitting.

In a small size (6" x 11.5") in portrait layout painting there is a child figure structured with jute weaved in traditional cot which is commonly used in village side. Child figure has put on a vest and seated on a small stool. The all body parts of the child like face, arms, legs are jute structured and broken from various places showing the oldness of cot. The main figure is side composed and balanced with scrolled jute *Wadhola* from left side of the figure the scroll is tied with a rope *Wadahan or Tangh* and multiple other weaved and broken jute threads from upper and right side of figure. From upper side a wooden bar *Baahin* wrapped with jute placed horizontally that holds a blurry child figure which is laydown as in dreamy pose and holding some jute threads in gentle way. His head is slightly tilted showing the innocence of the subject. The total drawing has been created in automatism style with blue ballpoint color having specific ballpoint Frottage texture. And background has been filled with *Fumage* tea wash contrasting with blue texture in pleasing way. The facial expression has composed perfectly as eyes with slightly stretched up side lips and nose a cut from upside of right eye is consciously placed to maintain the balance. Miniature paintings are typically quite small, and Waliullah has continue the same tradition to maintain the identity of miniature painting. The small size requires artists to use fine brushes and meticulous techniques to create detailed and intricate compositions. Same as he applied with ballpoint pen having all contextual qualities of miniature painting. One of the defining features of painting is the exceptionally high level of detail. Artist used tiny ballpoint strokes and fine lines to create intricate forms, textures, with beautiful expression of feelings. The overall composition with multiple convey lines creating a sense of movement in hole painting, the placement of blurry child figure on top is lead to sense of fleeting moment, imagination and visualization by the child. The facial expression has composed perfectly as eyes with slightly stretched up side lips and nose showing the naughtiness of the subject figure. And the cut from upside of right eye is endorsing the same statement in different way.

The painting *Castle in the Sky 02* (Figure 2); This painting is also characterized by highly detailed and finely executed artwork but in traditional technique *Gouache* on a large scale on a traditional surface *Vasli*. Artist has continued the mood of visual content to experiment the visual creation by using his fine skill and creative sense of conceptualization. Through the application of surrealist painting technique *Juxtaposition* he has developed a complex visual content maintaining the inheritance of miniature painting as assorted floral approach and the *Juxtaposition* treatment representing the surrealist aesthetic in visual application. In this contemporary miniature painting the artist has break the traditional and conventional approaches in size and partially in visual treatment and the visual adoption is from childhoods of village life. As the requirement of subject he has used the subject matter belongs to villager child belongings in specific state like, lotus plant *Pabun*, leaves *Paboro*, lotus flower *Dodi*, lotus fruit *Tikki*, Stem *Nuru*, Fiber *Dhago*, water and mud impression in background. In the painting artist has placed these elements creatively in *Juxtaposition* to make an optical illusion of a child face, symbolism of dreamy thoughts.

Divergent to traditional miniature this painting is large in size 17" X 26" in portrait layout. An optical illusion of child face made with different parts of the lotus plant in *Juxtaposition* style of surrealist aesthetic symbolizing the dreamy moment of a village life. Child face had put its chin on a wave of water, the face skin is made of *Paboro* the lotus leaf, the features and skin texture drawn skillfully in *Frottage* style of automatic drawing majorly used in surrealist imagery. The eyes of the child are made of lotus seeds exhibiting the gravity of skills in connection with concept, the roots of lotus leaf are sketched artistically intensifying the visual beauty, texture develop the feel and the sense of movement in small portion of the painting. The color palette is used consciously in traditional technique and picked from the natural environment of lotus crops to picture the contemporary theme in the painting. The main subject a child face is composed in lower part center of the *Vasli*, which is an optical illusion created with lotus leaves. In the left side of main subject a lotus flower, right side a lotus stem and In upper part of the canvas a lotus fruit is composed artistically. The lotus fibers falling from upper side wrapped with all visual elements of the painting enhancing the

composition esthetic and developing a sense of space and movement in the art work. The total drawing has been created in *Automatism* style of surrealism, using the traditional technique of miniature painting *Gouache* with highly feature details and *Frottage* texture. As like total series the background has been filled with *Fumage* water color wash to expose the main subject and other visuals in pleasing way. The facial expression are drafted perfectly fully open staring eyes with childlike lips and nose, the leaf texture on face starting from nose is creating a pleasing texture and this unreal skin texture is showing the surrealist aesthetical approach of the artist. One of the defining features of painting is the exceptionally high level of detail. Artist used tiny brush strokes and fine lines to create intricate forms, textures, with beautiful expression of feelings. And visualization and composition is truly carrying the feel of dreamy look in painting.

The painting *Castle in the Sky 03* (Figure 3); This painting is best example of surrealist approach in creating visuals or subject matter of an art work. By the nature of miniature technique this painting is also characterized by highly detailed and finely executed *Gouache* on a large scale on a traditional surface *Vasli*. Majority of characteristics of approaches in technique, skills and visual treatment is flowed as the mood of series and applied in other paintings just the subject matter is replaced to narrate another situation of the fleeting moment of a child. The surreal approach of painting or drawing the *Automatism* is executed to draw the subject matter visuals. In this contemporary miniature painting artist has overlooked the traditional size of miniature painting technique but has maintained the traditions in rendering and shading technique *Gouache* of traditional miniature painting. Same the visual adoption is from childhoods of village life, by the requirement of concept like, a cot *Charpai or Khatta* sketched as high rising buildings in urban areas, a white contour figure of a child laying on the cot and looking down to the earth, the broken ropes of *Tangh* and jute, plane floor without rendering, and dark blue sky background in surreal *Fumage* impression. In the painting artist has composed these elements creatively in *Automatism* drawing technique and shaped to make the symbolism of dreamy thoughts.

The painting size 26" X 20" in landscape orientation. A cot sketched as high rising buildings in urban areas, symbolizing the imagination of a child laying on a cot and fanaticize it as a high rising building. This kind of imaginative practices and acts are the common part of the games and activities they are dramatizing to feel the fleeting of their desires and imaginations. The cot is sketched artistically in *Frottage* surrealist approach having the perfect skill treatment of the traditional miniature technique *Gouache*. The rendering of cot is highly detailed and windows, flooring of the building, well managed mixed structure of a furniture object and architectural construction. Specially the tops of the legs *Pawa* of the cot pictured as in traditional tombs structure. The white contour figure of a child lying on the cot and the ground where cot is placed and child is looking towards it, are deliberately outlined without shedding to symbolize and create a dreamlike environment and to create a sense of breath and depth in the painting. The position and gestures of outlined child are drawn perfectly the way is he looking down to the ground, placement of his hands on cot and position of arms and elbows are generating the life and feel in a simple outline. This posture is also showing the enjoyment and pleasure of the moment and the level of visualization skills to narrate a view from the fantasy to reality. The color palette is applied brilliantly supporting the theme and the requirement of theme, the cloudy textured dark blue background and soft rust like color of cot endorsing the feel of high rising structure, with light shaded broken jutes placed beautifully in the composition. The broken jutes wrapped with building and declining down to the ground in painting are improving the beauty and evolving a sense of space and movement in the painting. Same the background has been filled with *Fumage* water color wash in dark blue producing the cloudy texture, as an supporting element of composition to portray other elements in their required depth and dimensions. Same as Waliullah's one of key expertise this painting is also exceptionally high level of detailed work. Artist used tiny brush strokes and fine lines to create intricate forms, textures, with beautiful postures and

feelings. And visualization and composition is truly carrying the feel of dreamy look in painting again.

Furthermore the artworks of the series repeatedly remind a sense of longing and nostalgia through his imagery. The use of soft and gentle colors with nostalgic imagery produces visually aromatic atmosphere, that leads a viewer to his own nostalgic memories, dreams. The surrealist approach in visual making of the fantastical and the recognizable creates a sense of longing for a world beyond our own. This is the key feature of Waliullah's work is the ability to shape a blurry insight view amongst the reality and fantasy in detectable and appealing forms. So his paintings are depicting a surreal landscape, filled by imaginative features and objects from fantasy, this dreamlike approach is allowed to the subconscious of mind, where reason and logic give a way to the imagination and irrationality.

Art Work as Concept and Context

Waliullah Mirani explores the fleeting moments between the wakefulness and nap, visualizing the fantasies and dreamlike thoughts of a child from village side. This exploration is accomplished through a traditional technique of art making from artist's area in an experimental visual representation of surreal aesthetic with nostalgic depiction of rural life. Waliullah Mirani has painted the moments that every child feels in his childhood. The moments when a child think and try to practice everything derived from his fantasy and longings. The children are getting inspiration from his surroundings and trying to be as they inspired or influenced from. Many children want to be as like their parents, siblings or any other person, profession or in any situation they desire to be or to be the part of it, they use to try to act as they want to be, they imagine the environment and engaged their selves in illusory environment. They feel the feelings what they desire, where they became as their ideal or anyone what they want to be. The core concept of the series rotates around the liminal cosmos between reality and fantasy, a cosmos usually experienced during the transition from subconscious to consciousness. This fleeting moments are characterized by a haze of limitations, where the child's imagination takes flight, creating the imaginative world of his own. The chosen title itself narrating attitude of the art and acts as a persuasive symbol of these artistic emissions, presenting a realm of endless possibilities and longings. The artist attempt to capture the soul of this short-lived practice, decoding the intangible world of imaginations into tangible visual form.

These concepts are rooted in the artist's personal feelings, observations and experiences of childhood in a village life. In this context artist has visualized the imagery scenario and also have picked the painting feature elements from real world available in rural areas; like cots, lotus plants, insects, flowers, jute and other boggings of a villager child. These elements are interlinked with child's imaginative journey, produced and molded in surreal aesthetic in a familiar environment to convey the essence of concept. This environment shows a unique perspective of a child, and revealed in skillfully managed visuals, the visuals portrayed by a sense of curiosity, wonder, infinite imaginative memories. These visuals remind the nostalgia for a humbler time, a time when desires and imagination control strongly. This series is a best example of the power of imagination as tool exhibiting a surreal world of one's own creation with full of fantasies and innocent desires.

Conclusion

This research has explored that, the artist merge a traditional south Asian painting technique of miniature painting with the modern imagery style of the surrealist aesthetic. Waliullah adopted a contemporary style of miniature painting in which he intentionally experimented the characteristics of traditional miniature like size, medium and style of imagery but he has maintained the minuteness and feather-light strokes, Pardokht, fine lines detailing, and techniques like Gouache, Gadrang and Siyah Qalam, in other irregular mediums in miniature painting like ballpoint pen and mix media. In visual treatments or in the development of

imagery he has glorified the visuals with surrealist aesthetical approaches, like Frottage in shading and Fumage in background making. A unique aesthetic style of surrealism, the juxtaposition is also applied to execute the fantastical subjects in the art works to portray the dreamlike quality. The subject matter of the paintings is majorly representational; recognizable and picked from the nature and real world, included the Human figure, portraits, plants, flowers, insects, animals and the stuffs from daily village life, particularly the childhood memories; painted in the psychic automatism and juxtaposition modes to achieve the real sensation of the fleeting moments. Furthermore the artworks of the series repeatedly remind a sense of longing and nostalgia through his imagery. The core concept of the painting series rotates around the liminal cosmos between reality and fantasy, a cosmos usually experienced during the transition from subconscious to consciousness. This fleeting moments are characterized by a haze of limitations, where the child's imagination takes flight, creating the imaginative world of his own. The artist attempt to capture the soul of this short-lived practice, decoding the intangible world of imaginations into tangible visual form. These art works are not just visual depiction of fleeting moments; they offer to experience a world where logic shelved a side and the subconscious placed on high point. This study reveals the sustained validity and adaptability of miniature painting as a suitable medium for artistic expression, presenting its ability to hold new concepts and explore the unexplored spaces of the human imagination. Eventually the series *Castle in the Sky*, infused with surrealist sensibility, provide a momentous input to the current discourse between tradition and modernity in Pakistani art.

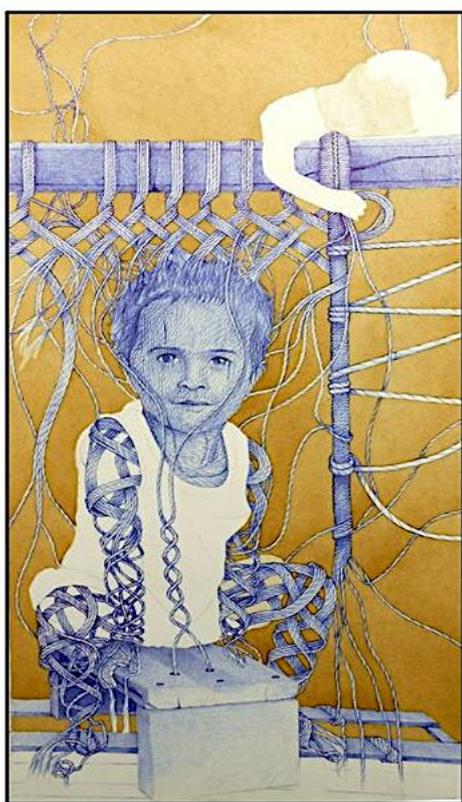


Figure 1. Waliullah Mirani, *Castle in The Sky 01*, 2013, Ballpoint Pen and Tea Wash on Vasli, 6" X 11.5".

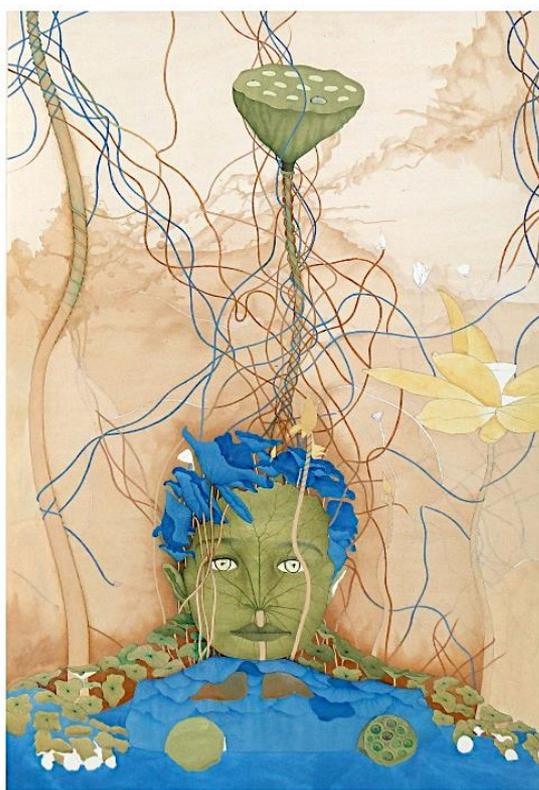


Figure 2. Waliullah Mirani, *Castle in The Sky 02*, 2013, Gouache on Vasli, 17" X 26".



Figure 3. Waliullah Mirani, Castle in The Sky 03, 2013, Gouache on Vasli, 26" X 20".

Bibliography

- Ades, Dawn. 2001. "Dada and Surrealism." In *Concepts of Modern Art: From Fauvism to Postmodernism*, by Nikos Stangos, 121-134. New York: Thames & Hudson World of Art.
- Ades, Dawn. 2001. "Dada and Surrealism." In *Concepts of Modern Art: From Fauvism to Postmodernism*, by Nikos Stangos, 126. New York: Thames & Hudson World of Art.
- Ataullah, Naazish. 2010. "The Semiotics of The Nation's: The Art of Truck and Miniature Painting." In *Mazaar, Bazaar: Design and Visual Culture in Pakistan*, by Saima Zaidi, 24. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dohadwala, Durriya . 2013. [www.academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/4813176/Reviving_Tradition_Pakistans_Contemporary_Miniature_Art). March. Accessed December 2024.
2015. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Vol. 8th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan , Graeme . 2008. "Visual Art: Painting as Research, Create and Critique." In *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, by Ardra Cole, 241. California : Sage Publications, Inc.