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Meet Ambreen Butt



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Ambreen Butt.

Every artist has a unique story. Can you briefly walk us through yours?

I was born and raised in the city of Lahore, the cultural capital of Pakistan, where I went to school at the National College of Arts for my Undergraduate studies. There I was trained in 'musawari', commonly known as Traditional Indian and Persian Miniature Painting, before migrating to the United States to pursue Graduate School in 1993. It was at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston that I focused on painting, printmaking and Installation art as my studio practice.

Mass Art's nurturing environment helped me in utilizing my training as a classical miniaturist and a western contemporary artist into developing an aesthetic that was complex and unique. The results were not watered down as I received an award from Joan Mitchell Foundation upon the completion of my grad school followed by a solo exhibition at Bernard Toale Gallery in Boston, my very first solo that was reviewed in Art in America magazine. Later I became the first recipient of Foster prize from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, a Maud Morgan Prize recipient from the Museum of Fine Arts and an artist in residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

I continued my career as an artist in Boston for over two decades prior to my move to Dallas and exhibited widely in museums and galleries nationally and internationally.

Dallas is relatively new to me but the cultural climate is very cordial and warm so it didn't take me long to feel at home. I am finding the Art scene to be very exciting and inclusive. I had my first Museum Show in this city a year ago at the Dallas Contemporary curated by Justine Ludwig. It was a wonderful learning experience to be engaged in dialogue with Dallas audience through my work. I am very much looking forward to contributing to the City through my art.

Please tell us about your art.

My work arises from two seemingly exclusive and often paradoxical traditions of Indian/Persian Miniature painting and contemporary Western art forms, my artistic practice incorporates, interprets, and negotiates both. My work gives form to the complex interactions and existences of those who live within and between disparate cultures. The narratives that I construct take on layered and juxtaposed elements that reflect these complexities, generating a new vocabulary for the elements of Western art, and yet recontextualizing traditional miniature painting by updating its technical and conceptual process.

While I draw upon deep traditions in my art, the work consistently responds to events within contemporary political culture, and the effect of these events on individual lives. Through my work, I address issues of power and vulnerability, and question the authority and hierarchy of social and political structures. As a global artist, I am engaged in the exploration of multiple truths and questions of human rights, war, and violence.

My art practice expands through multi mediums. From small water color drawings/painting to large scale murals, installations and sculptures, and from figure to systematic mark making.

Do you have any advice for other artists? Any lessons you wished you learned earlier?

There is no better advice I can give than what one of my favorite artist of all times once said, 'I paint with my back to the world'. So, be like Agnes Martin. Make art with your back to the world.

How or where can people see your work? How can people support your work?

My work can be seen in different Museums and galleries at different times. You can check them out in person if it is exhibited near you or you can visit my website: www.Ambreenbutt.com

I also post about my upcoming projects on social media so you can follow me on Instagram, FB and Twitter.

My next project will be in Washington DC towards the end of this year. I will post details on social media as the date approaches, so if you are in the vicinity come and visit.

There are several ways to support my work. First and foremost, see it, engage in a dialogue with it. If my art can make you think, it has served its purpose. I always love to hear how my art reaches my audience. Secondly if you are connected with an educational institution or a museum, organize a talk. I love to engage with students through my work, it is a learning experience for both myself and the students.