

## Press release:

### ***Playing with a Loaded Gun: Contemporary Art in Pakistan***

September 6 - October 4, 2003

**curated by:**

**Atteqa Ali**, PhD Candidate, Austin, Texas

**artists:** Ambreen Butt, Alia Hasan-Khan, Hasnat Mehmood, Imran Qureshi, Rashid Rana, Reeta Saeed, Adeela Suleman, Masooma Syed, Risham Syed, Saira Wasim

They say that opposites attract—some contemporary artists in Pakistan force them together. They examine the nation's most difficult social, cultural, and political issues in paradoxically beautiful and playful artworks. Some use the elegant and jewel-like technique of miniature painting while others incorporate imagery, materials, or styles from the local, vibrant mass culture. In both approaches artists consider dilemmas such as nuclear war, domestic violence, and murder. Their images thrill the viewer with their precious styles, carnivalesque constructions, and vivid colors. But this delight quickly shifts to dread when the subject matter is understood. Even as the viewer is horrified, the images draw the eye closer through their luminosity. This dichotomy between pleasure and fear suggests the complexity of life in Pakistan, where even the founding of the nation combined the joyous celebration of independence from British rule with the violent events that ensued when it partitioned from India. In August 2003, as they set to celebrate the fifty-sixth anniversary of the nation, people in Pakistan continue to face the tragic consequences of its beginning. The nuclearization of both Pakistan and India and the struggle over Kashmir, for example, are issues that can be traced to Partition and threaten life in both countries today. But even as they deal with security fears and governmental instabilities, Pakistan's citizens enjoy the pleasures of life including everyday rituals of eating culinary delights and more significant festivities such as the birth of a child. The works of art in this exhibition mirror this duality.

A full color brochure containing an essay by Atteqa Ali will be available free of charge. Please contact **apexart** for further information.

*Gallery hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 11-6.*

This exhibition is supported in part by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and New York Department of Cultural Affairs.

### **Opening Reception**

Saturday, September 6 at 6-8 pm

### **Panel Discussion**

Wednesday, September 10 at 6:30 pm

Atteqa Ali with Mahnaz Fancy



Ambreen Butt, *Untitled*, 2002

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