

THEATER

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The Lineup

Interviews with a Sculptor, a Violinist, a Corpse Expert, a Choreographer, a Dancer, and a Clarinetist

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Humaira Abid
painter, sculptor

Two years ago, after moving to Seattle from Lahore, Pakistan, your first solo show was about your miscarriages. Were you afraid to be so public?

I don't know why I have this personality, but whatever people don't want to talk about, I want to bring it up. In our society, if you tell someone you had a miscarriage, they think it's your fault, so women stop talking about it. I decided I would share because maybe it helps somebody else.

The miscarriage pieces were carved wood sculptures. Now you're showing miniature paintings, done on the functional side of irons you sculpted out of wood.

In Pakistan, sculpture is really not recognized at all. People started thinking that it's like worshiping idols. I am a Muslim. And I had this big passion that I had to support sculpture. I took it as a challenge. Then I did this series combining sculpture and miniature—it was an idea I'd always wanted to execute. I went to Contemporary Istanbul [annual international art fair], and I showed them some images. In Pakistan, many people are doing miniature painting, because the National College of Arts is the only school in the world that offers a full degree in miniature painting. But when they saw [in Istanbul] that someone was combining sculpture and miniature, it was like, "You are doing something different, why don't you work on it more?"

You have a nude in this show, but you never studied from the nude.

I went to the best art school in Pakistan—it is considered a place where you had freedom. People dream to visit that place. But the maximum we had was a male person wearing shorts. And no women showing any skin. If you see nudes in works from [Pakistani] artists, it is a lot learned from books.

How has art in Pakistan changed in your lifetime?

When I went to school in 1997, it was considered a hobby. People encouraged their daughters to take art so that they could decorate their houses better. My family said, "Okay, you can do what you like, but there will be no support from the family," and I took it as a challenge. After a few years, I was able to establish myself, and my father said in front of the family, "I think that was a right decision and I am so proud of her." That was one of the golden moments of my life.

Abid shows work at ArtXchange Gallery through March 16, artxchange.org.