

OF COLOUR AND FORM: THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF MA AHED

Mumbai, 30 November, 2010

Remarks by Ejaz Ahed, CEO, Ahed Associates

Ejaz is the son of MA Ahed, and received his architectural training from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He has been CEO of the Karachi office of the Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants (PEPAC), and President of the Institute of Architects, Pakistan. He currently serves as CEO of MA Ahed's architectural practice, Ahed Associates, and is a Trustee on the Foundation for the Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA), Pakistan.

Ejaz was scheduled to be on the panel discussion *Of Colour and Form: The Art and Architecture of MA Ahed*, but due to delays in obtaining his visa from Pakistan, he was unable to come to India.

He prepared these remarks that were read out at the programme in Mumbai:

Ms. Bunty Chand,

Mr. George Jose,

Mr. Kaiwan Mehta,

Mr. Mustansir Dalvi,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings from FOMMA and Karachi. It is indeed a sad moment that I, a trustee of FOMMA, author Sheba Akhtar, and others could not be there owing to visa difficulties, but let this not hold you back for the discussion of the book and the event that Asia Society India Center and Marg Publications have so kindly organized at the renowned Sir. JJ School of Arts, where my father had the privilege of attending almost 70 years ago and had always held it in great regard till he

passed away in 2001. In fact the book contains his works as a student at J.J.

I consider MA Ahed to be a renaissance man born well before his time, not because I am his son, but what the camera shy and soft spoken man leaves behind as his legacy to the world in his art and architecture and his many contributions to our society, some of which you will read in the book. In this part of the world people are mostly truly discovered for their qualities when they are gone to their maker, so why should this story be any different.

I knew very little of my father for he was lost in his world of art and architecture, except for the last 3 decades of his life which I cherished for he shared them with me and my daughter, Farah, and always hoped that for our sake God would give me a few more years to soak in the wisdom of this great man.

Ahed *Saheb* led a compartmented life- he had his artists community, the architects community and his musician friends. Very few people know of his passion for Indian classical music and that he played the harmonium with the likes of Roshan Ara Begum, Nazakat Ali and Salamat Ali. Pakistani artist Wahab Jaffer talks of the time they used to meet at Ali Imam's Indus Gallery in Karachi where Ahmad Pervez, MF Hussain and others gathered regularly and discussed art. It must

have been wonderful days as that ambience does not exist today for our artists in Pakistan.

For Mr. Ahed, art was natural to him and architecture was an acquired skill. His architecture was very functional except for the external building skin where he used his decorative abilities and was very knowledgeable in construction and craft and kept to the rules of the game in respecting building materials in the classical concept of architecture. It is in his painting where he expressed in inner self with open abandon experimenting in mediums and techniques, figures, portraits and abstract expressions. He was so prolific that he would draw on any surface he found near him. Ahed Sahib knew seven languages and recited poetry in Urdu and Farsi, expound the history of Indian and European Art, history of Architecture and read everything from philosophy, humor to mystery books.

You will interestingly note that Ahed *Saheb* never titled a painting as he said “I paint for myself, by myself” and never marketed himself although his works adorn many homes and galleries.

My friends, Mr. Ahed did all his art and architecture, music and every function of his life and never let the world know that he did all this with one hand, his left one, for he was born without the other. He never let it be known he had a handicap. He told me that at Sir JJ College of Architecture, when he was initially refused as he required

2 hands for architecture training, he just told them to test him and then decide. The rest is history when he went on to England for his education and was awarded the Sitar-e-Khidmat from the Government for his services to the nation.

I am very grateful to Architect Sheba Akhter for researching and writing the book on *Ahed Saheb* and to FOMMA for publishing the book and to Elite Publishers for the printing of the document for Mr. Ahed's admirers which exist around the world and look forward each year to the greeting cards I send out, which are one of *Ahed Saheb's* paintings, and which I hope to continue till I am around. Very special thanks to Mr. Zulfiqar Lakhani, Chairman FOMMA for his support at all levels for the cause of art and for the publication of this book.

I thank Mr. Kaiwan Mehta and Mr. Mustansir Dalvi for being on the panel today I miss being there but art and architecture have no political boundaries and are common bonds between our nations.

I once again thank Mrs. Almitra Billimoria of Marg Publications and Asia Society India Center, particularly Mr. George Jose and Purwa Bansod, for their generous cooperation in the handling of the event coordinated through our energetic trustee and Director General of FOMMA, Mr. Jalaluddin Ahmed, who is our source of inspiration and guidance in the development of art in Pakistan. FOMMA will send you more books if they are needed and I will send one especially for the JJ School library shortly.

My best wishes to all and thank you for your presence here.