

Artist Statement

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This was my second experience to work with khoj after seven years, when a lot has changed in my life and work. If I look back seven years ago, I remember I came here as a result of the success of a novel body of my work and during the residency period I continued with what I had done earlier. But this time round, I was motivated to use the residency platform at KHOJ as a 'zero space' and do something I was desperate for but at the same time, I had no clue of what and where I wanted to start from.

The freedom of unbounded work ethics without any start or end has its magical potion, an impulse completely driven by crazy notions, unknown nooks and corners of boredom, anxiety and imagination.

The everyday practice at my studio was becoming too quiet, a little rusty and claustrophobic because of very limited interaction with the world outside in a way. This always has been an artist's motivation to come out of his own mental space at times, to keep a distance from oneself and to re-enter again as a new young visitor. So for me also, it was a desire for a new space both physical and mental to re-enter the vast landscape of imagination. This was the motivation and main objective to do this residency at khoj, and I can very well see, analyze and articulate now that it is over and my mind has sifted through that time.

During the month long time at KHOJ, it was more of a journey where I had a given a time frame and a space, the only two clearly defined things to me, and the rest; that is, my project, materials, objectives, sources, no sources, inspiration, I did not have a clue, and it was good for me 'I enjoy this roller coaster ride always, more than a linear selected confirmed path.

Halfway through the residency, this stayed the same and while enjoying the roller coaster ride of the residency, communicating one's thoughts and ideas with others is the toughest experience as you don't want your incapability of knowing nothing should be understood as dumb ignorance because it is not. It was challenging to answer the curious minds around and this became a parallel ride.

The one thing I knew what I didn't want to say and didn't want to do, was by discarding the materials and thoughts slowly and gradually one by one I felt getting close to what was desired. In the end I was left with only the space alone without any physical material or material thought. It was too abstract in its appearance in my mind, more of an atmosphere, a gesture, a mood. I enjoyed cleaning the space and creating a new space, which was whiter, brighter, empty and spacious. I achieved this by making structural changes to the existing space. This made me work like an engineer, who seeks advice from other builders, carpenters, and painters. This was a totally new attitude I learnt. I definitely wanted something alive there, which was not made by me or my hands, which I have no control over, and which can move, change and becomes part of the space. So the pigeons in white and black patches and their dropping were like my brush marks on a clean white canvas. This is how I would interpret this work created during the residency from my aesthetic painter's eye.

In terms of success, I felt the residency worked for me in every way. It reassured me of my ability to know my capacity to still go beyond and explore and experiment with unknown spaces. It was a breakthrough on the practical side as I got an invitation to participate in a group show here after long time.

My future plans constitute doing a solo show at w+ k gallery in mid December 2011. Being a Pakistani married to an Indian, I am desperately waiting for a resident permit in India so that I could travel also. I would like to travel for work. For me this work was more site-specific and after this I want to do some more site specific work. I am definitely looking for such projects.

KHOJ like always has been a wonderful experience and very refreshing. As I said earlier it is a place which gives enormous freedom and grand opportunities to explore and experiment. The best thing is its location and surroundings, which does 'not house only artists but also the outside air, its local flavor of heat, dust, mud, children, noises, history and what not.

To improve all I can say is that the Press coverage (newspaper /publicity coverage) or the journalistic part should be taken more seriously and not just eyes wash. It should bring people who are really into art writing. There are all kinds of artists who come from different backgrounds and skills. Most of these are not trained or well versed speakers or articulated. A good journalist into art writing knows how to approach art works and when out of curiosity.

The other thing is the timing to let the work develop and reach to a certain point where one can talk about it. Just taking photos and quickly gets a few ideas, guessing and writing is a little flimsy. Halfway through the residency, I had to tell something quickly to the journalist, as she wanted to finish her job as soon as possible. I believe writing is a very responsible area, which should be involved as serious as part of an art project. It is like giving a final polishing to projects that KHOJ supports and its efforts.