



The Noble Sage

## **CONTROVERSIAL PAKISTANI ARTIST RETURNS TO LONDON**

**‘Tasaduq Sohail: Small Oils and Watercolours’**

29<sup>th</sup> October – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2008

In June 2007, The Noble Sage opened the largest Tasaduq Sohail exhibition ever held in the UK. The work exuded an irresistible power and charm. It was less than a year later that a Sohail canvas entered a Bonhams auction in Dubai. The estimate was higher than expected: \$10,000 to \$15,000. The work eventually sold for a staggering \$31,200. The figure was an indicator of the high investment worth of this senior artist from Pakistan. It is with great excitement that The Noble Sage will be opening its second solo exhibition for Tasaduq Sohail, this time highlighting a series of small oils and early watercolours.

Tasaduq Sohail is one of the most renowned contemporary artists of Pakistan. At seventy-eight year old, Sohail has had more than 40 solo exhibitions to date, more than 25 in Pakistan and 16 internationally. Sohail, to his glee, is finally enjoying the success he so rightly deserves after more than forty years of toil to make his mark on the London art scene. The cost of this happiness has been immense: a psychologically-scarring youth in a country warring for its independence and subsequent self-exile from his family at the age of 31. To this day, Sohail’s work is very much the product of these early formative years in Pakistan.

Born in Jullundhar, East Punjab, in 1930, Sohail describes his early days as fraught with despair, violence and repression. With partition taking effect in 1947, his home region was soon in bloody turmoil with many different groups vying for domination. Sohail remembers his family fleeing Jullundhar: ‘They nearly killed me in Amritsar... we could see them sharpening their knives. They were going to kill the whole train.’ It was only incidental luck that his family escaped with their life.

It is in these early years that a hatred began to take shape of those systematic forces that suppressed humanity’s natural longings. The mullahs walking amongst his people,

preaching God and their 'correct' way of life, became archetypes of oppression and abuse, the great hypocrites guiding violence and destruction from behind-the-scenes. Whether it was priests, rabbis, or mullahs, to Sohail they were all living a lie and, worst of all, forcing others to live the same way. By 1961, the claustrophobia became too much and the artist left Karachi for England.

In the mid 1960s Sohail began to use art to approach his past. Whilst continuing on the brink of poverty, subsisting on further menial jobs as well as selling works from a stall in Bayswater, Sohail obsessively churned out small works of art in every spare moment that he could find. It is some of these watercolours executed from 1984 to 2001 (when the artist returned to Pakistan) that are exhibited in this exhibition along with a series of recent oil paintings on canvas.

Sohail's small oils are dark, intriguing vignettes depicting the sordid life of humankind. The players are always the same: the innocent child caught in the glare of indecency; the woman as object of sexual lust abused by male characters; animals in all their varieties, real and fantastical, bastions of good and propriety; the lecherous old men driven by carnal instinct and depravity and, as a subset, the hypocritical clergymen preaching piety but abusing that power at every turn.

His watercolour works are much lighter in mood. A good example is the large untitled watercolour from 1990 depicting a naked woman sitting high on the branch of an apple tree. Her clothes are hanging on a washing line below her at her feet. The scene is one of daydream, tempting us like an advertisement in a magazine. The apple is always the giveaway of Sohail's symbolic intentions for such a work. The motif is a clear reference to its Biblical meaning. It is a reminder to the audience of the temptation that surrounds us all the time, that to which we often do not admit or that we choose to ignore.

#### **Private View**

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008, 6.30 - 9pm.

Special Press Viewing at 6pm. Inauguration speeches to be made at 7.30pm.

#### **Exhibition Listings**

Tasaduq Sohail: Small Oils and Watercolours (exhibition catalogue available)

29<sup>th</sup> October – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2008

All artworks for sale; free entrance

Exhibition price range: £500 to £1000

The Noble Sage Art Gallery, 2A Fortis Green, London N2 9EL (near East Finchley Tube)

Mondays & Tuesdays                      By appointment only

Wednesdays - Friday                      11 - 7.30pm

Saturdays & Sundays                      11 - 5pm

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#### **Public and Media Enquires**

Please contact Cristina Oliveira, Directorial Assistant, via email [thenoblesage@btconnect.com](mailto:thenoblesage@btconnect.com) or by phone - 0208 883 7303. For further information about The Noble Sage Art Gallery, please visit [www.thenoblesage.com](http://www.thenoblesage.com).

Further information about the artists, images and interviews are available for press use.