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AGM makes big deal of miniatures

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By: Nikki Yeh

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As the old saying goes, "history repeats itself." The expression held true last night at the Art Gallery of Mississauga's opening reception for Bazgasht: Traditional Methods and Modern Practices.

Bazgasht, which means echo or the likeness of something that repeats itself in Hindi, is the AGM's latest exhibition. Fluently reviving miniature paintings from South Asia, curators Ali Adil Khan and Asma Arshad Mahmood were beaming with pride amid artwork dating back as far as the seventeenth century.

"What we've done here is handpicked 51 paintings from all over the world," explains Khan, who describes the miniature painting style as a practice where artists make brushes out of squirrel tail hairs, use opaque mineral pigments, and paint on wasli (layers of paper bound together with glue).

And clearly, last night's full house experienced the essence of miniature painting. What we want to do is share the tradition – there's a huge revival of miniatures taking place right now. Contemporary artists are learning the technique and applying subjects like issues related to the wars in Iraq, terrorism, homophobia in South Asia and feminism," says Khan.

"Perfection and detail are the hallmarks of miniature painting. What we want to do is share the tradition – there's a huge revival of miniatures taking place right now. Contemporary artists are learning the technique and applying subjects like issues related to the wars in Iraq, terrorism, homophobia in South Asia and feminism," says Khan.

Other notable paintings included Portrait of a Lady by Pakistan's Ayesha Durrani, which highlighted the lack of respect for the female mind, as well as Cole Swanson's Exaltation (Two Squirrels and a Junkie).

"This is the first of a new body of miniature paintings I'm working on," reveals Toronto-based Swanson, who's also a curator at the Living Arts Centre. "I've taken an old painting of an emperor and replaced it with myself to show how self-absorbed artists can be."

Bringing all attendees together for a warm, welcoming speech was Robert Freeman, executive director/curator for the AGM. Freeman also accepted a donation of \$7,500 made to the AGM from exhibition sponsor TD Canada Trust.

Bazgasht is on display at the AGM until July 12. Admission is free. The AGM is located at 300 City Centre Drive. For more information, visit <http://www.artgalleryofmississauga.com%20/>

<mailto:mississauganews@live.com>



Staff photo by Daniel Ho
 Ali Khan poses with one of the art pieces on display at the opening of the Art Gallery of Mississauga's Bazgasht: Traditional Methods and Modern Practices Revival of Miniature Paintings from the Sub-Continent exhibition on Thursday evening. The exhibit features South Asian "Miniature Paintings" which incorporate a lot of detail. Khan is the owner of the South Asian Gallery of Art in Oakville and curator of the Mississauga gallery's Bazgasht exhibit.



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