

# Mughal Miniature Paintings, Imran Qureshi: Pattern Transformations

Grades: 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

Visual Arts

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## Lesson Description:

Mughal miniature painting originated during the 16th century in the Mughal Empire which spanned what are now India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. This art form is marked by careful attention of tiny detail, lush jewel tones, epic subject matter, and small scale. This practice grew out of Persian miniature painting and primarily provided visual representation of Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—the use of such sacred subject matter often led to the work itself being seen as sacred. After the fall of the Mughal Empire the practice became reduced to a copying historical works for the tourist trade in India.

Imran Qureshi was born in Hyderabad, Pakistan in 1972. Since 1994 he has been teaching drawing and painting at National College of Arts in Lahore, from which he graduated in 1993. The National College of Arts in Lahore Pakistan is renowned for its program dedicated to the centuries-old tradition of Mughal miniature painting which flourished from 1526 to 1857. This major at the NCA mimics a traditional eight year apprenticeship in two years of schooling. The meticulous technique begins with the posture of the students. The students are required to

be seated on the floor for hours a day, hold their papers close to their eyes and brace their painting arms against their body. Their posture is essential to mastering the tiny brushstrokes needed to create pieces with such fine details. They spend their first year and a half copying historical works and learning to make their own tools. Only in the final half year are they allowed to explore their own creative devices.

Qureshi has participated in the collective workshop Darmiyaan, which reflected upon the artist's role in a post 9/11 world. Qureshi is best known for his ongoing portraiture series entitled, *Moderate Enlightenment*, which depicts subtle subversion of religious ideals by presenting individuals taking part in small acts of rebellion. Qureshi recently participated in an exhibition entitled *Political Patterns*, in 2011. In this exhibition Qureshi transforms blood splatter into vibrant, blooming floral patterning; juxtaposing death and violence to hope and growth.

Students will use the work of Imran Qureshi to influence their own transformative patterns.

## Objectives:

- Students will learn about the tradition of Mughal miniaturist paintings and how Qureshi has interpreted the miniature tradition in a contemporary setting
- Students will know the work of Imran Qureshi and the subject matter/themes he uses in his work
- Students will create their own work that uses transformative qualities both in form and meaning



**Materials and Resources:**

9x12 Watercolor paper or Bristol board

Newsprint and graph paper

Pencils

Colored pencils

Watercolor

Acrylic paint

Fine paint brushes

Links and Books to look on Imran Qureshi and Mughal Miniatures:

- <http://sites.asiasociety.org/hangingfire/imran-qureshi/>
- <http://www.corvi-mora.com/imranqureshi.php>
- <http://www.sharjahart.org/people/people-by-alphabet/q/qureshi-imran>
- Whiles, Virginia. (2010). *Art and Polemic in Pakistan: Cultural Politics and Tradition in Contemporary Miniature Painting*.

**Critical Questions:**

- How do artists use imagery to convey meaning in their work?
- How can artists transform meaning; through form, subject matter?
- Can the repetitious nature of patterning convey a message?

**Activities:**

Preliminary Discussion:

Discuss the work of Imran Qureshi, specifically his work from the show *Political Patterns* and the 10<sup>th</sup> Sharjah Biennial.

[http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2011/political\\_patterns/photos/10\\_imran\\_qureshi](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2011/political_patterns/photos/10_imran_qureshi)

[http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2011/political\\_patterns](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2011/political_patterns)

Discuss the transformative qualities of the work in both form and meaning. In other words, how does Qureshi literally transform his work through form (blood spatter into flower blossoms), and how is the meaning or feeling changed through the formal transformation?

**Art Activity:**

- Students will create their own transformative paintings/drawing pattern that transforms both form and meaning. Like Imran Qureshi, students will use combative imagery to create a pattern that sends a message.
- Students should start by brainstorming some ideas on newsprint. To help them generate ideas, possibly supply some newspaper articles or copies of Newsweek© magazine so they can read up on some important political and world issues. Once they have chosen a topic to discuss in their piece, have them think of images that relate to the topic. Then, have them think of images that are opposite or positive outcomes to the issue (i.e. Qureshi uses blood spatter to symbolize war and death but then uses floral patterning to symbolize growth and rebirth). Have students sketch how they will combine images in a pattern to give them a transformative quality. Graph

- paper could be useful to some students when designing their pattern.
- Once students have preliminary sketches done have them choose a piece of either watercolor paper or Bristol board that is 9x12 inches. Students may also choose their media; watercolor, oil pastel, color pencil, or they may mix media.
- Students will then use their preliminary sketch to create their final piece on the Bristol board or watercolor paper.
- When finished, students will participate in a critique of each other's work.

**Assessment:**

- Students have created a piece that has transformative qualities in both form and meaning
- Students have created a dynamic pattern using symbolism or cultural/recognizable imagery

**National Standards:**

**Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

9-12.1 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

9-12.2 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

**Using knowledge of structures and functions**

9-12.2 Students evaluate the effectiveness of artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions

9-12.3 Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems

**Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas**

9-12.1 Students reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture

9-12.2 Students apply subjects, symbols, and ideas in their artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life

**Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures**

9-12.1 Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

9-12.2 Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places

Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making



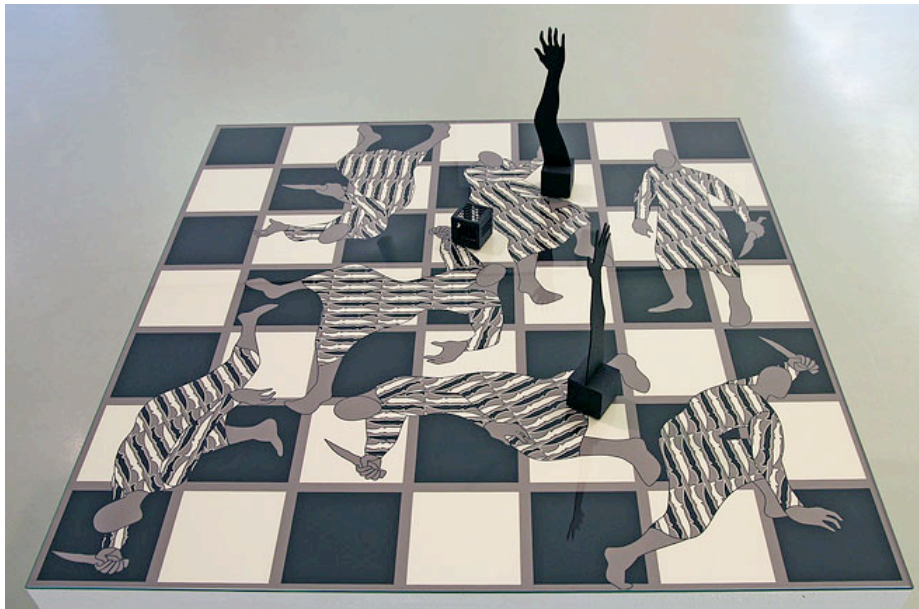


**Other Artists to look at....**

**Zena el Khalil**



**Parastou Forouhar**



Abdulnasser Gharem

