

دل دریا

**Dil Dariya by Mughees Riaz**  
25 Years of Creative Excellence

**22nd** May 2025 **5:00** pm

Exhibition will continue till 10th June

Curated by

Prof Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud & Amna I Pataudi



  
**EJAZ**  
ART GALLERY



## **Mughees Riaz**

"This exhibition means a great deal to me. It brings together the creative spirit of my family — people from different fields of art — who have made valuable contributions to our nation, both before and after Partition.

I'm grateful to be part of such a legacy — one that's deeply connected to this land. You can feel it in their work, and I hope you feel it in mine.

This is also a personal journey — a look back at 25 years of my own art: a journey through time, memory, and imagination."

Mughees Riaz is one of our sensitive and thoughtful artists. He hails from neighborhood adjacent to the exotic presence of the Shalamar gardens. Now a pensive terraced garden of fountains, manicured Mughal scene and dreamy tall mango trees that bear varieties of sweet succulent fruit. In this vicinity where the artist was born, there was a school managed by Paris, where the artist was raised as a student. Even while at school he would draw and sketch the stray objects of his interest. He informed me that in his exams the unused part of the last page was often used by him for making a sketch or two. Apparently, the examiners never objected to these renderings on the exam paper. It was obvious that a natural artist was being raised under them. There were many other artistic spirits in Baghbanpura at that time. To name one was Mr. Abdur Rehman Ijaz (later his son Mian Majeed Ijaz, who was a distinguished photographer) Mian Inayat Ullah was another one, who painted miniatures on silk, also resided in the area? There were numerous others who preceded them, including some of Mughees's close relatives. Baghbanpura was culturally a very active place then and both these artists took part in dramas staged by the cultural society of the area. There is actually a photograph where one of them is dressed as a woman. Mughees was however more interested in the river Ravi than in Mughal architecture of the area or the other cultural aspects of the place. Like many other citizens of Lahore, he was attracted to the mystical spirit of the river Ravi. Ravi is perhaps the naughtiest of the five tributaries of the Indus. It descends from the north and rather aggressively enters the plains, consequently with a sudden change of weather from the mountains and hills it can threateningly flood the plains. It is a very shifty river which has changed course several times in recent history. It flowed near the fort and the Chauburji at one time. The river is noted for its carp that in common parlance is referred to as khagga. Some distance north of the railway bridge on the bank of the Ravi there was a temple that is now in India, some devotees would catch a Ravi Khagga fish, put a gold ring in its nose and throw him back in the river as an offering to their God. There was obviously a loud expression of joy and much celebration when that fish was caught with a gold ring on the Pakistan side of the border. Among the Muslim families mostly those who resided along its banks more to the south expressed their religious fervour in another extraordinary ritual. I recall that some of my relatives who resided in Sanda Kalan would proceed to the river with several cauldrons of grated carrots cooked in milk and sugar as their offering to the patron Saint of the river, Khawaja Khizar who protected travelers.

However, the river Ravi has many faces. It has appeared in the work of several artists in changing moods and different settings. Mughees in most of his work seems to have captured the river's meditative mood in a chaste translucent setting of early morning light, before sunrise and the evening. He sensitively captures the changing moods of the river by recording the light at different times of the day. The viewer is encouraged to gaze over the river through the morning and evening vapours. This lends the entire prospect a sensation as of looking through a silken mesh. The whole composition is animated by artfully simplified beautifully delineated human figures. There are beautifully painted animals too that add an atmospheric depth to his compositions. The ever-present crow that seems to pose a constant question as to the reason for its presence in almost every picture, is it a harbinger of good news or the forecast of the arrival of an unexpected visitor. In romantic verse of our folklore a crow is regarded by the romantic heroine to be a messenger for conveying her longing for her lover and bid him to hurry back home. For reasons best known to the buffalo, she allows the crow to perch on her ample posterior. It is a timeless relationship that has unfortunately been ignored by the romantic poets. All credit to the artist for this exotic strain in his work.

Appropriately his buffaloes walk the banks of the Ravi with serene dignity. That has as calming an effect on people as the silent scene around them. It seems as if the artist has never accosted an angry buffalo when she is protecting her young calf. Mughees has painted other animal life but no other animal has been as meticulously painted as his paintings of the human figure or his renderings of the crow and the buffalo. In passing he also attempts to capture the fading lights of the day that adds a vibrant mellow aesthetic silence and a sense of romance.

What a splendid escape from mundane realities of everyday life. Every now and then everyone should escape into the serene magical world that Mughees Riaz has created with his skill. Frankly I like his work.

Mian Ijaz ul Hassan

## **Curatorial Note: Legacy & Work**

Mughees Riaz is a well-established name in the field of art. This exhibition holds great significance as the viewer for the first time will be able to delve deep into his roots, his inspirations, and the evolving thought that underpins his work. As a mid-career artist, Mughees brings together the many threads that have shaped his artistic journey. This show is a synthesis of his heritage and his philosophy of art brought together in a language which is uniquely his own. Mughees Riaz comes from a family deeply entrenched in art and the creative expression. His artistic journey therefore is the continuation of a dialogue that began decades ago.

His maternal great-uncle, famously known as Azad, was known for his skillfully hand painted film posters that once adorned cinema fronts across the country during the early years of Pakistan. In addition, Azad also had the reputation as a brilliant painter of portraits of notable political figures, such as the Quaid, Fatima Jinnah and others which were often displayed at public events.

Mughees's extended family includes another distinguished artist—Mohammad Latif—who was educated at what was then, the Mayo School of Arts. Latif specialized in design, pursued further training in New York, and upon his return, played a foundational role, as Director of Advertising for the Government of Pakistan, as the first designer of the nation's postage stamps. Mughees's own father, Mehmud Khalid Riaz, was also an NCA graduate. He received his training in London, and was later entrusted with looking after the printing and photography department at his alma mater. This heritage of artistic mastery was complemented by spiritual depth. One of Mughees's ancestors, who migrated from the province of Abadan in Iran, was an Imam and a prolific writer.



Among the family's treasured possessions is a *Hilya*— in the form of an elaborate hand written manuscript that offers a vivid portrait of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), conveying his qualities through poetic and descriptive language. This childhood exposure to the arts understandably has left an indelible impression on Mughees's worldview which is visible in his sensitive paintings. From a young age, Mughees showed a strong inclination toward drawing. He studied at the Baghbanpura Public School, which was run by members of the Parsi community. His natural talent for drawing was quickly recognised. Teachers often relied on him to illustrate fruits like apples, bananas and oranges on the blackboard for the rest of the class. His skills earned him numerous certificates, and he fondly remembers making sketches even on his written exam papers as well, much to the chagrin of his examiners however. He pursued his FA at Baghbanpura College, followed by a BFA and then an MFA from Punjab University. It was during his MFA final exams that he experienced what he describes as a spiritual encounter. While painting outdoors, a mysterious figure appeared, introducing himself as Allah Bakhsh, a name reminiscent of the legendary painter. The figure encouraged him, saying, "Continue with what you're doing—this is your path." Mughees carries those words with him even now, as a sacred affirmation of his purpose as an artist. Mughees's work is deeply rooted in his land, capturing the soul of everyday life in Pakistan. His landscapes are inhabited by buffaloes, crows, cats and dogs—creatures which are often overlooked in our society—they find dignity and beauty in his compositions. His human figures, too, are not beautified, girls in burqas, boys with beards, ordinary people captured with extraordinary compassion. He paints with sincerity, seeking purity and a quiet strength in his subjects.

To him, art must reflect one's environs. "If you live in Pakistan," he says, "your art should speak about your own social and cultural setup. It should have authenticity." He challenges the dichotomy between abstraction and realism, seeing both as expressions of the same Reality. "In nature," he says, "there is both abstraction and realism— these are just names given to the same Reality-they are not opposites, their essence remains the same ". This belief is evident in his landscapes, where light and color merge, where form and feeling are inseparable, where realism merges into abstraction. One recurring motif in his work is the sun. He has painted it countless times, and yet it never loses its power. "The sun rises every day," he explains, "but each day is different. Our existence is not monotonous, so how can the sun ever be boring?" For Mughees, each sunrise is a reminder of renewal, of continuity, of the infinite. He believes art is a journey without a fixed conclusion—it is an infinite process of becoming. "You build upon it layer by layer. There is no end, and no beginning- it is all infinity."

Prof Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud and Amna I Pataudi



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 28 x 28 inches | Kirdar Series 2

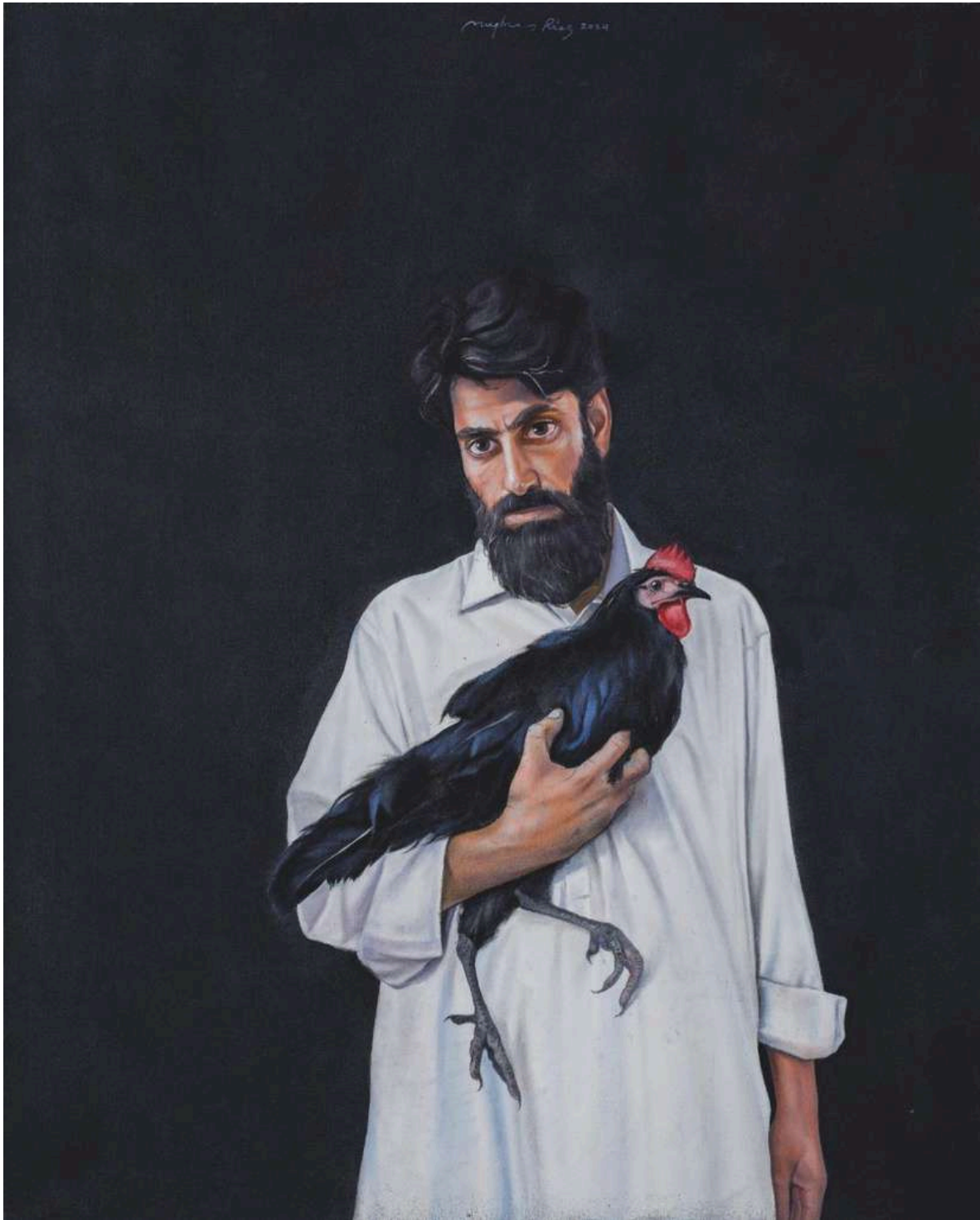




Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 30 inches | Caught I



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 18 x 26 inches | Pyar Kahani Series

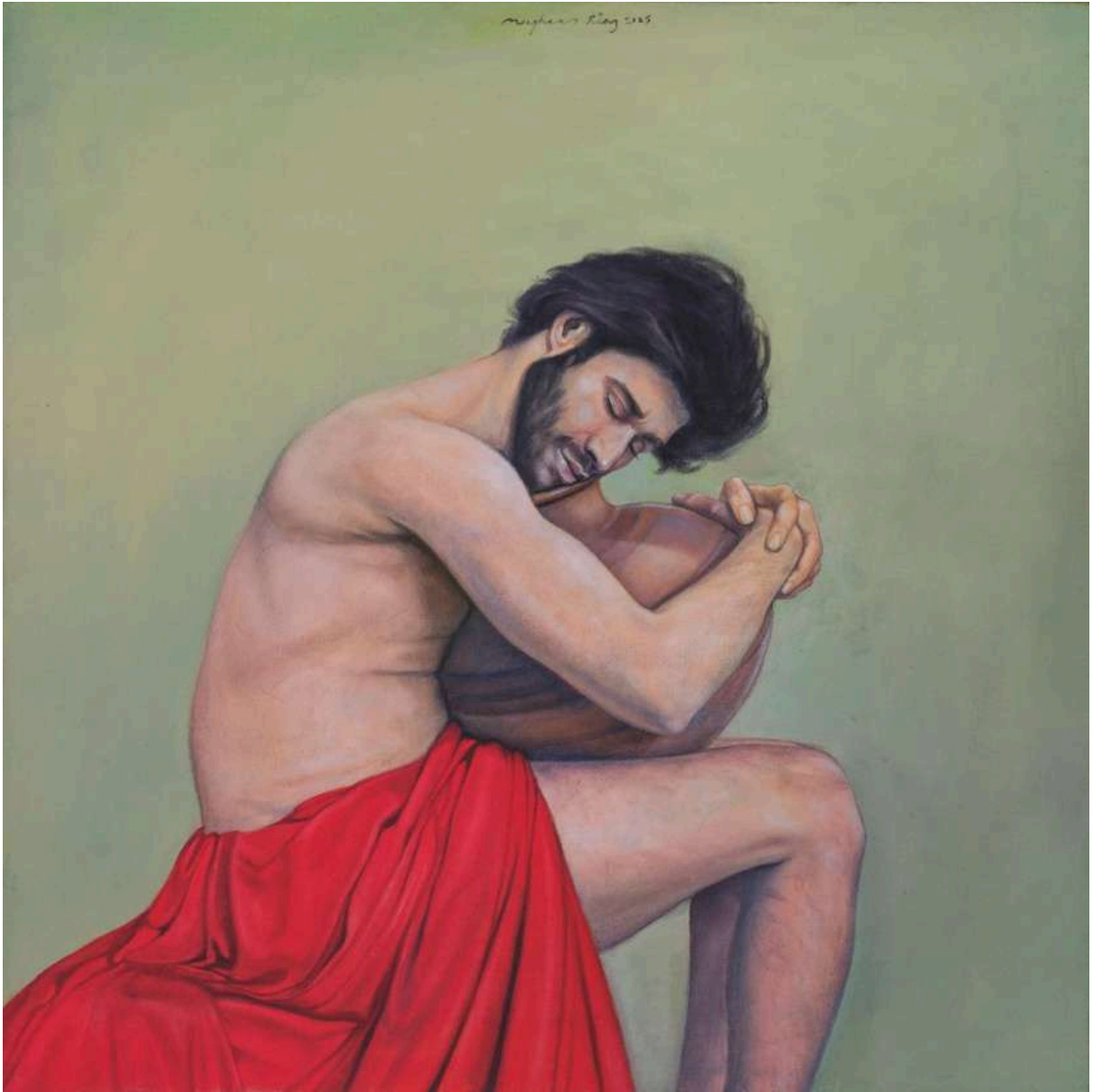


Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 30 inches | Caught II



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 21 x 29 inches | Hug





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 27 x 27 inches | Man with Clay Pot Series





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 36 inches | Woman Staring

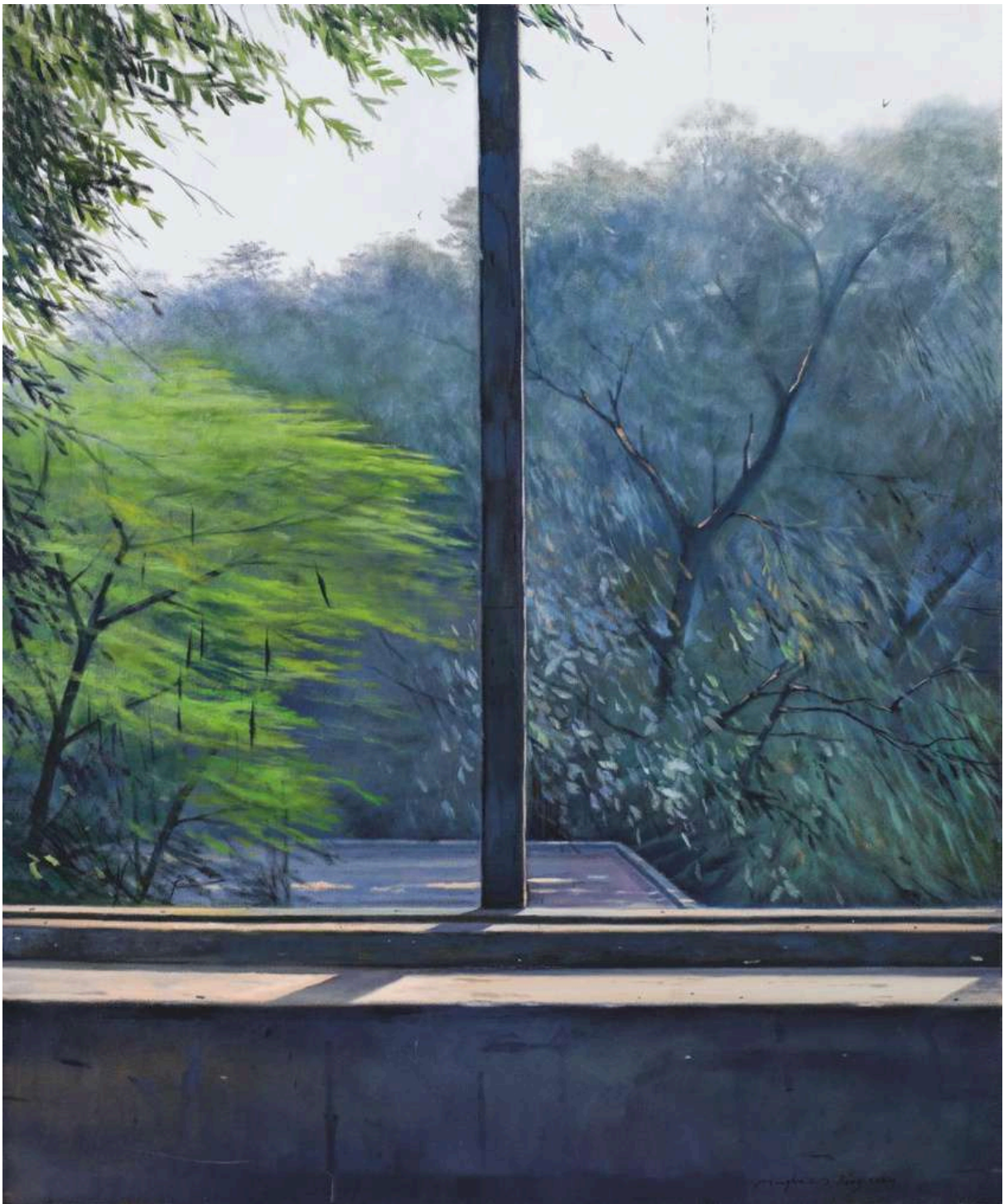


Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 14 x 18 inches | Parday Main Rahnay Do 2



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 40 x 47 inches | Pyar Kahani Series





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 30 x 36 inches | Window



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 20 x 20 inches | Trees





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 33 x 33 inches | The Chair 2



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 36 inches | Resting Crows



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 48 inches | Seated Buffaloes



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 48 inches | Sleeping Woman



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 20 x 56 inches | Gypsy Huts at Ravi River





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 36 inches | Boat in Mist



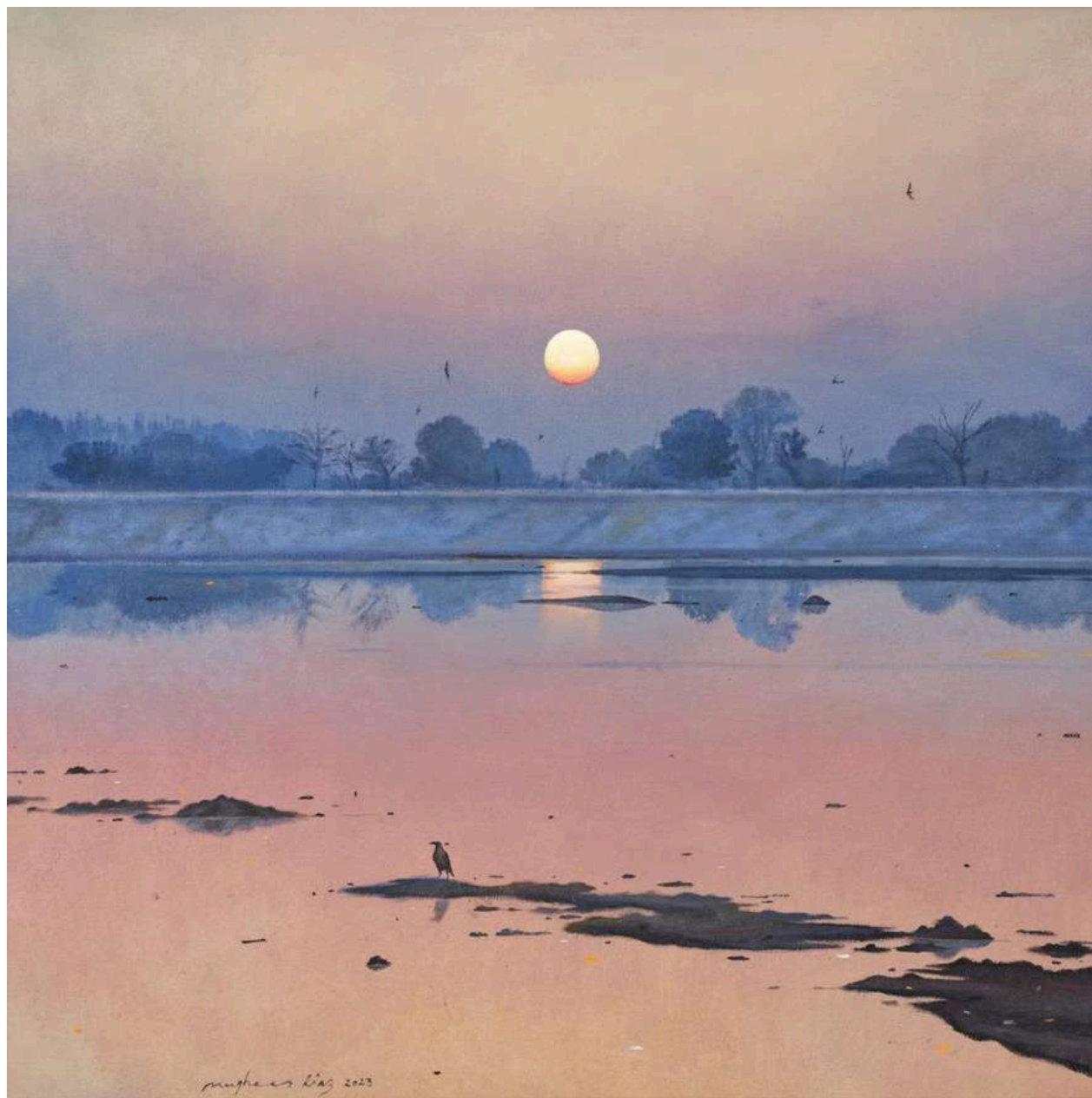
Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 20 x 56 inches | Sleeping Dog



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 60 inches | Cat Staring



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 60 inches | Crow



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 28 x 28 inches | Sunset Series





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 48 x 96 inches | Boats at Ravi River



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 48 x 60 inches | Flying Buffalo



Mughees Riaz | Charcoal on Sheet | 28 x 40 inches | Charcoal Drawing I



Mughees Riaz | Charcoal on Sheet | 28 x 40 inches | Charcoal Drawing II



Mughees Riaz | Charcoal on Paper | 28 x 40 inches | Charcoal Drawing III





Mughees Riaz | Charcoal on Sheet | 20 x 28 inches | Charcoal Drawing IV



Mughees Riaz | Charcoal on Sheet | 20 x 28 inches | Charcoal Drawing V



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas with 24K Gold Leaf | Portrait of Buffalos (Set)



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 60 x 96 inches | Story of Love



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 48 x 96 inches | Sunset in Mist





Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 36 inches | 14th August



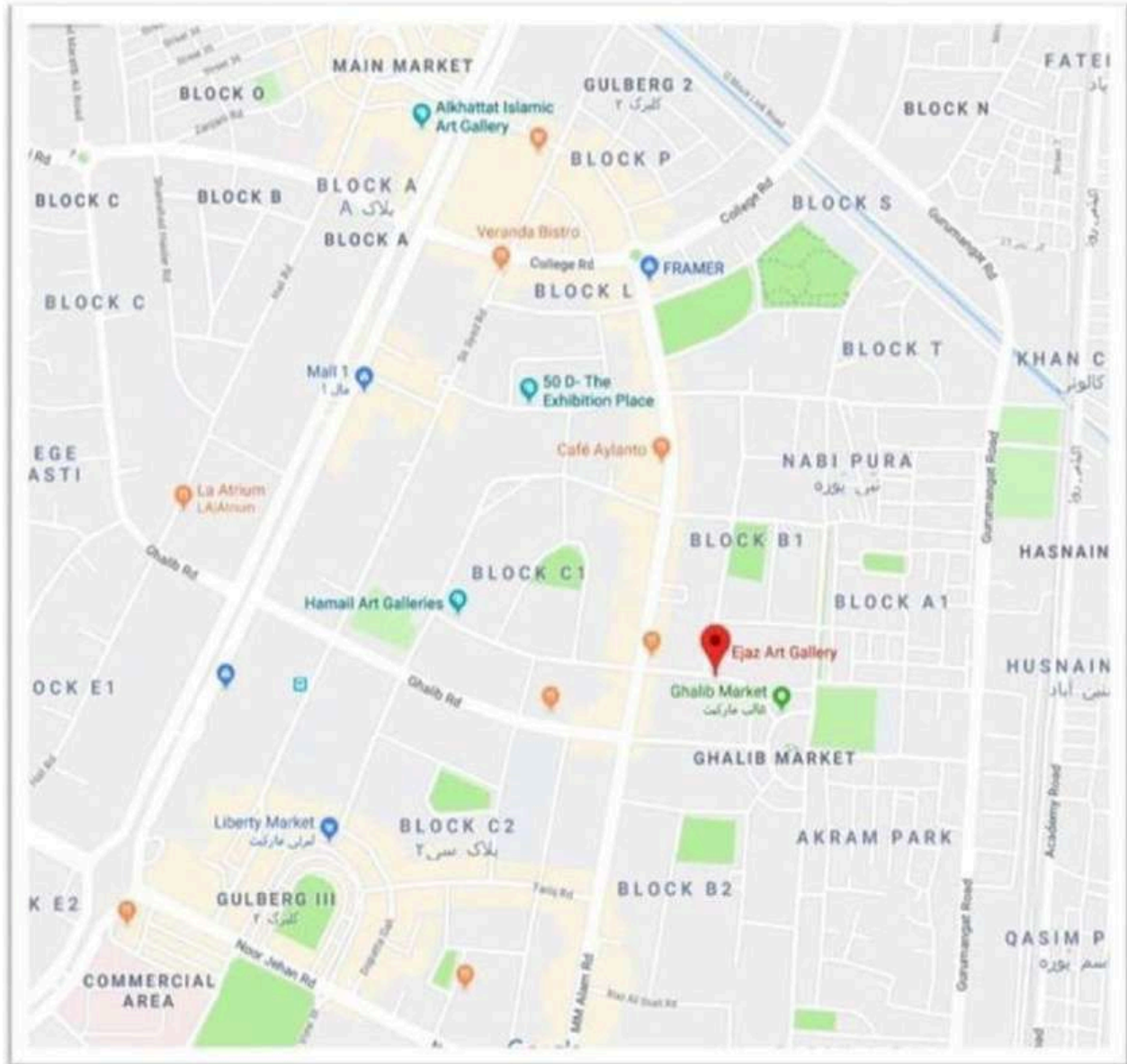
Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 60 x 96 inches | Sunset Series



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 60 inches | Smoke of River Ravi



Mughees Riaz | Oil on Canvas | 48 x 60 inches | Sunset Series



  
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