

# The Daily Star WEEKEND MAGAZINE

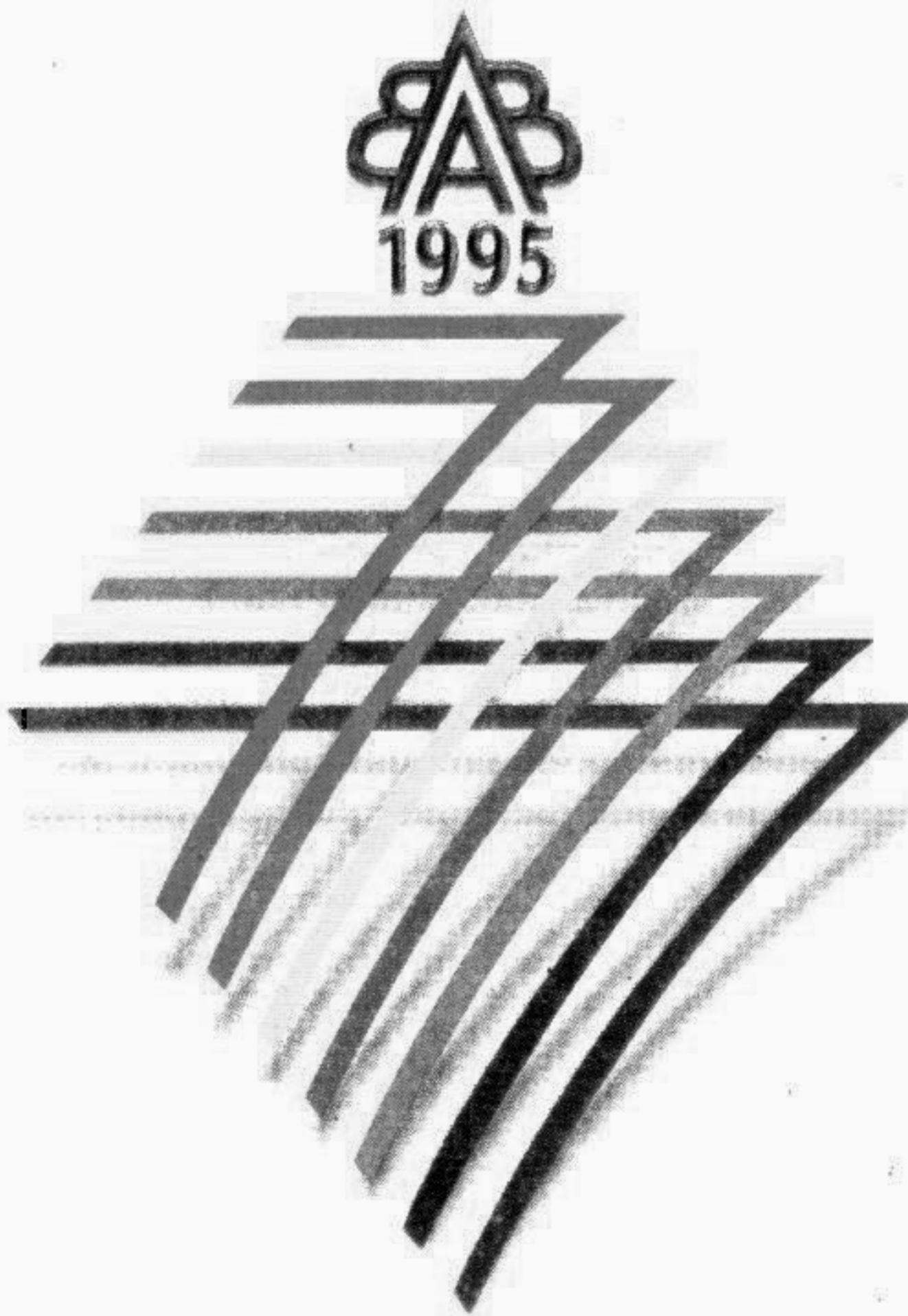
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1995

## Participants

Australia  
Bahrain  
Bhutan  
China  
Hong Kong  
India  
Indonesia  
Iran  
Iraq  
Japan  
Jordan  
Kuwait  
Laos  
Lebanon  
Malaysia  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
Nepal  
Oman  
Pakistan  
Palestine  
Philippines  
Qatar  
Republic of Korea  
Russian Federation  
Saudi Arabia  
Singapore  
Sri Lanka  
Syria  
Thailand  
United Arab Emirates  
Vietnam  
Yemen  
Bangladesh

## 7th Asian Art Biennial Bangladesh '95

The Asian Art Biennial officially began on January 4, 1981. Fourteen countries including host Bangladesh participated in the first exhibition. Meanwhile, fourteen years have gone by. The number of participants has gone up to 34 and the Asian Art Biennial Bangladesh has become one of the major exhibitions in Asia and the Pacific. The growing number of participants testify to the importance of the Biennial. One persistent criticism is that the exhibition has so far failed to attract front-ranking artists of the continent. Some critics think that the Asian Art Biennial has become a carnival for younger artists rather than the well-known ones.



### Grand Prize

Abdul Latif (Syria)  
Maruma Abe (Japan)  
Ranjit Das (Bangladesh)

### Honourable Mention

Mahbubur Rahman (Bangladesh)  
Phillip Doggett-Williams (Australia)  
Jyoti Ranjan Panigrahi (India)  
Mahmudul Huq (Bangladesh)  
Anwar Saeed (Pakistan)

restrict himself to exact colouring and accurate measurements. There are rules and restrictions especially when the images of Gods and Goddesses are shown, be it inside a monastery or on scrolls. Medium of paintings is normally executed from herbs, roots and vegetable dyes which are mixed with animal glues. In recent times chemical colours are also being used. Few young artists try on oil but the general artists opt for traditional means only. There are volumes of Buddhist scripts describing traditional arts like scale, colour, pose, etc. It plays important role in maintaining country's spiritual and cultural values. Portrait of Shabdung and Mandala brought for exhibition are fine examples of traditional arts.

Institutions like School of Fine Arts in the capital Thimphu are set up to preserve and promote traditional arts. With the incoming of more tourists there is growing demand for traditional art works.

On the other hand, one should not mistake that modern art is neglected in Bhutan. In fact it is given equal attention to flourish modern art. Prominent bodies like the Royal Society of Nature Preservation (RSNP) and Ministry of Social Education organise art competitions on various themes annually.

### Bangladesh

THE subcontinent was divided in 1947 and Dhaka Art

one, figurative art inspired by the folk tradition and the other by the current trends in Europe.

In the late Sixties the political situation became cloudy, casting a spell on the artistic activity of the country. The once creative minds were facing serious social, economic and political uncertainties. Not many exhibitions were encouraged, nor any new force emerged. But the mental horizon changed completely with the events of the Liberation War and emergence of a new state of Bangladesh in 1971. The artists of this generation concentrated on getting over the scars and ravages of the recent past by experimenting with colour and forms. New frontiers were being explored and the outcome was visible sometimes in well laid out figurative art or in a few blotches of vibrant colour or an area pulsating with rough texture. They utilised new methods and materials to depict the complex reality of their time.

### India

WITH the new developments, specially international relations in the field of technology, trade and cultural exchange, art was bound to feel their impact. Indian contemporary art also was no exception to such developments. Its early phase betrays this impact bit too loudly. But also inherent in Indian art was an undying urge to sincerely explore the aesthetic potential of its own roots. This has been reflected often

and gnosticism (spirituality). That is, visual manifestations are just keys to approaching the ideological and religious aims of art.

In the Occident, on the other hand, nature and humanism are facts of corporal life, forming the foundation of art. If they exist at all, thought and gnosticism are just added spices. Great artists like Picasso will never separate themselves from nature, thus depriving their art from thought.

In order to identify the image of modern and improved art after Iran's Islamic Revolution (1979), it is necessary to pay attention to rich cultural values and genuineness of Iran and Islam.

The finding of values and origins of national and religious culture is not a backward step in art or mentality, nor any incapability in encountering modernism. Instead, it is an effort with great power for achieving artistic identity.

The center of visual arts in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which plays a fundamental role in the growth and flourishing of various branches of the visual arts, namely, painting, graphics, sculpture and pottery. It had organised a great number of measures with the result that its cultural effects are witnessed everywhere.

### Iraq

IN 1941 Iraq's first Society of Artists and Art Lovers was formed which included architects like Akram Shukli, and artists like Faik Hassan, Jawad Salim, Atta Sabri, Issa Hanna and Haj Mohd Salim. The society held its first exhibition in 1941 and continued for several years to mount regular exhibitions.

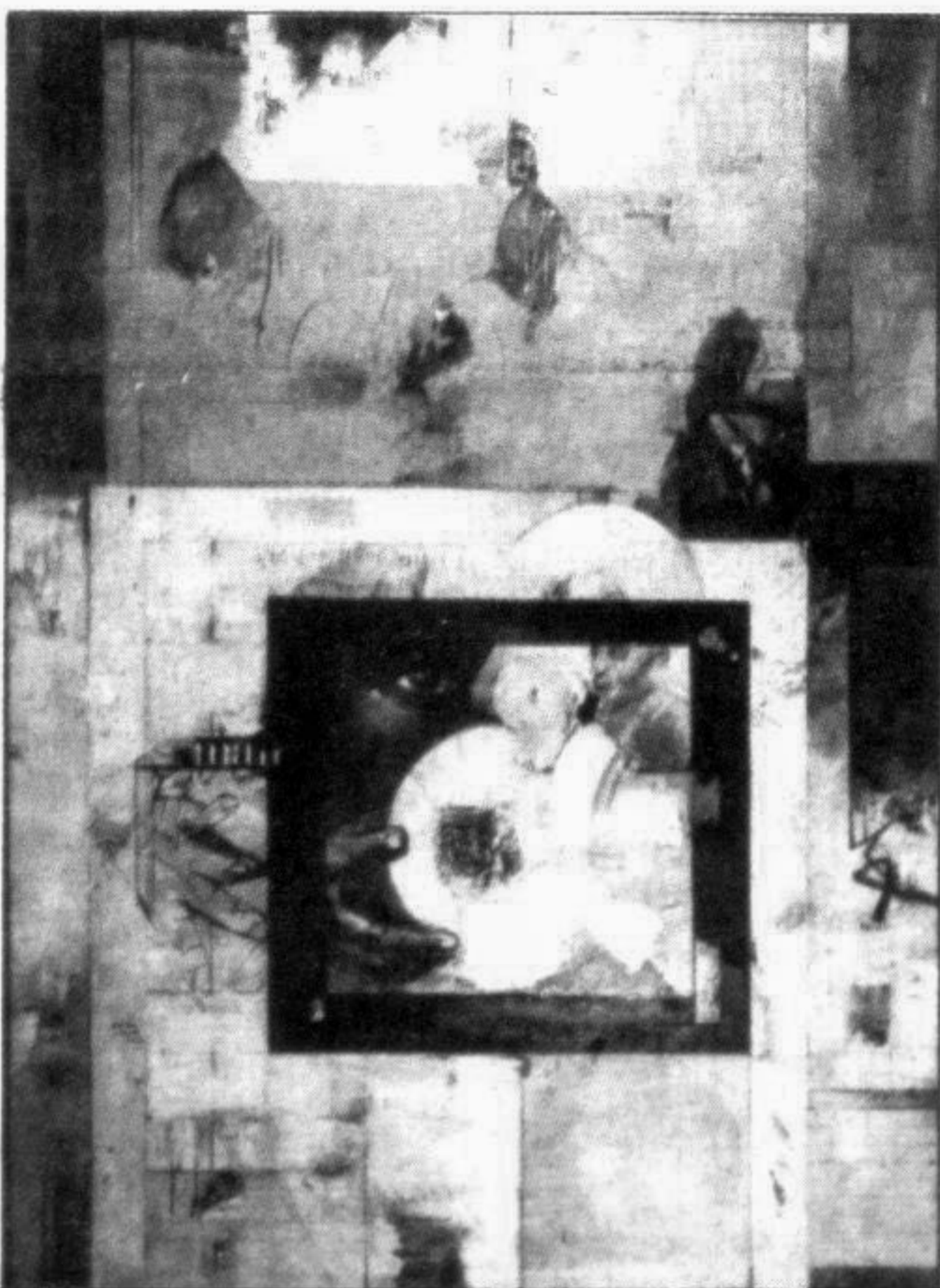
Art flourished in the next two decades and many leading artists joined their own groups. In the 1950's the government opened the National Museum of Modern Art and included in its collection the works of prominent Iraqi artists the years before the Revolution of June 1958, has extended modern Iraq's (1921-1958) constitutional monarchy, were characterised by a cultural period where all the arts, literature, music and visual expression went hand-in-hand.

After 1968 the Iraqi government adopted an open-door policy vis-a-vis art and started holding institutional, as well as local art festivals and meetings. The first half of the 70's witnessed outstanding activities by individual artists. Today, the patronage by government and private parties has made the country's contemporary art movement one of the most active in the Middle East.

### Jordan

PAINTING, as a form of expression, is of a recent vintage in Jordan. Until four decades ago, Jordanian artistic expression was confined to rugs, tents, jewelry, embroidery and pottery. There was no place for easel and brush, stone and chisel in the life of the traditional Jordanian artist. In barely a generation, the country has been transformed, opening outwards to the Arab-world and the West, while building an expansive urban culture where the wide international array of art forms in sculpture, ceramics and painting

Continued on page 12



Anti-clockwise: Ranjit Das, *Man and Time*, oil on canvas; Maruma Abe, *Imaginary Footpath*, forged steel and pots; Abdul Latif, *Folk Manuscript-2*.



### Australia

AUSTRALIA has one of the most diverse populations in the world as a result of changing patterns of immigration. Where once immigrants came primarily from England, Ireland and Middle Europe, since the late 1960s they have come also from Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. It is now estimated that one in four Aus-

tralian is from a non-English speaking background.

The two artists in 7th Asian Art Biennial were both born in Australia to parents who were recent migrants. Phillip Doggett Williams family is from Malta and Vera Zulumovski's from Macedonia, both artists grew up with an acute awareness of their parents' cultural origins and the difficulties facing those

adjusting to life in a new country. Their first language was that of their parents.

For Doggett-Williams and Zulumovski, exploration of their ethnic backgrounds has been a crucial factor in the development of their practice as Australian artists. As adults both have visited their parents' homelands — Doggett-Williams made the first of a number of visits to Malta in 1981 and Zulu-

movski visited Macedonia in 1992 after her residency in the Australia Council's studio in Barcelona.

In Zulumovski's work there is an unexpected fusion between Macedonian rituals and Australian settings. This union gives the prints their potency, offering the possibility of speaking to two cultures.

### Bhutan

TRADITIONAL art in Nepal is mainly connected with religious beliefs and are depicted in portrayals of Gods, Goddesses and Saints. Bhutanese house will be adorned with religious artifacts like scrolls of Gods and Goddesses hanged on the walls etc. Other decorations are also found in plenty.

A traditional artist should

School was established a year later. Some of the young students were determined to travel beyond their geographical boundary to learn, to participate in the upheavals going on in Europe and America. They returned home full of enthusiasm and new ideas. Gradually, abstract, non-objective and geometric art made their impact felt in the studios. There were two trends at that time,

in the contemporary art of India, specially since the Seventies, both in the artists' individual as well as collective creative endeavour. However, the elements of this identity have become too subtle to be properly defined. It is more to be felt.

### Iran

IN the Orient, particularly in Islamic countries, the basis for art is thought, religion



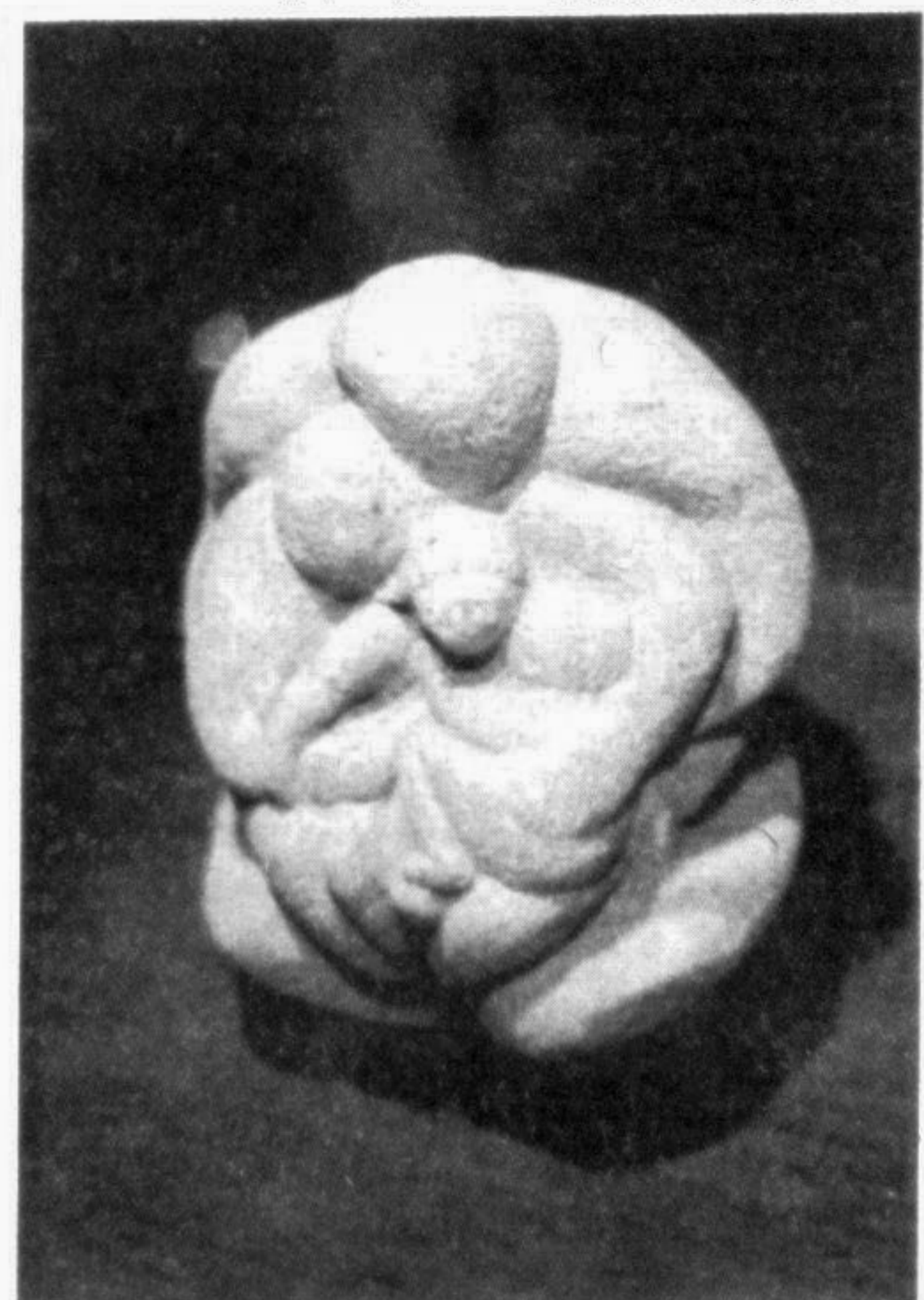
Safwan Al-Ayoubi, Saudi Arabia, *Inclusion*, oil on canvas



A. Viswam, India, *Endless Penance*, oil on canvas



Mazher Nizar, Yemen, *Head 2*, oil on canvas



Durriya Kazi, Pakistan, *Close as Clouds*, cast stone