

Art mart by M. Saeed Kureshi

## Elucidating illusion

**W**hen human sense begins to contort under illusion, it divulges the response of the brain in terms of interpretation and control of the perceived stimulus. Illusion is a semblance, a deception, a mirage and a make-believe that tricks the mind into translating a peculiar visual experience into something what the reality does not hold. Vision, owing to its effectiveness and tangibility, is a leading instinct which relegates the illusions generated by other human faculties.

Having opted to employ visual illusion to ex-

press his apprehensions, Imran Channa, in his recent works at the Canvas Art Gallery, Karachi, emphasises the way history has been wilfully fabricated by those who were given the responsibility to preserve its authenticity. The central idea of the artist's series of 17 artworks is based on 'Lik likoti', a Sindhi term for the native game of 'hide-and-seek' that suggests the inconsistency of visual reality and the intriguing phenomenon of 'now you see it — now you don't'.

The 12 graphite drawings form the larger segment of the repertoire which bears a different treatment compared to Channa's previous works.

These renderings guide the viewers through the gruelling events recalled from the past, portraying the country's independence and the heart-rending exodus across the freshly demarcated territory. The delicately drafted drawings, 'Lik lakoti 2 A to L', have been transformed into fluid artefacts that fuse in and out of reality; a style of expression exclusively improvised by the artist.

The rhythmic fading of the composition across the paper resulting from the undulating horizontal swashes, culminates into a momentarily visible anguish of those who suffered. Consequently, the oscillating chiaroscuro between the countless wavy lines conveys the ambiguities that haunt the country's past, albeit in a demeanour that reflects mature sobriety.

The four large installations 'Lik Lakoti 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D' arranged by the artist are composed of wooden boxes, akin to those used for transporting paintings. The enclosed pictures of migrants moving on trains, bullock carts, horse carts and many thousands on foot, are barely visible from a small slit sawed across the upper end of the boxes. This arrangement, once again, suggests the partial obscurity of history that has perhaps been deliberately misquoted and concealed.

The only video 'Lik lakoti 3', amongst the exhibits is a manifestation of the illusionary magic of David Copperfield on a large scale where he makes the Statue of Liberty disappear! The clip substantiates the artist's conviction that the human mind is exceptionally vulnerable to deception, where millions can be left dumbfounded.

Using a video game animation, all the magician did was to create a pseudo blip on the radar screen that would disappear in sync with the drop of the curtain. Timed with this was the turning off the ring of lights around the statue and switching on another ring elsewhere for the helicopters to circle around. Viola! A million jaws dropped in overwhelming awe, instantly proving the power of illusion!



Untitled

Photos by Fahim Siddiqi / White Star

Channa believes that illusion has the potential to overcome the rationality of the mind and can persuade it to accept the fabricated accounts that defy historical facts. The artist, with fair introspect, has boldly chosen to tread the uncharted territory which only a few would dare to explore. According to Sameera Raja, the curator of Canvas Art Gallery, the artist is contemplative and believes in implementing new fangled ideas that pleasantly evoke inquisitive-

ness among his audiences.

Having exhibited extensively at home and abroad, Channa has acquired a unique identity owing to his investigative research behind every project. His solo exhibitions 'Badshahnama' in Geneva, Switzerland and 'The memory is the message' in Dubai, UAE and Philadelphia, USA, in 2010 and 2011 respectively, were remarkably successful and brought him international acclaim. ■



Untitled