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SADEQUAIN IN PARIS 1961–1967



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IN PARIS
1961–1967

Cover

Sadequain's illustration for
Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* (detail)

Lithograph on vélin de Rives paper
32.5 x 50.5 cm. (12 ³/₄ x 19 ⁷/₈ in.)

Inside cover

The Webbed XIX

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated '5.5.66' lower left
50 x 71 cm. (19 ¹¹/₁₆ x 27 ¹⁵/₁₆ in.)

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SADEQUAIN
IN PARIS
1961–1967

5 November–14 November 2015



Syed Ahmed Sadequain Naqqash was arguably one of the most important South Asian artists of the 20th century. Sadequain was born in Amroha, today's India, in 1930 to an educated North Indian Shia family, to which calligraphy was a highly valued skill.

Following his education between Amroha and Agra and after a number of years working at various radio stations in Delhi and Karachi as a calligrapher-copyist, he began to dedicate more time to his artistic practices. In 1955 he exhibited a number of paintings at the residence of Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, a liberal patron of the arts. Soon after this, he received a number of important governmental commissions for municipal murals, which led to a number of solo exhibitions in Pakistan.

In 1960 Sadequain won the Pakistan National prize for painting, and was invited by the French Committee of the International Association of Plastic Arts to visit Paris. The following few years were to be some of the most important for the young artist in terms of his artistic development, and it was whilst in Paris that he began to achieve international critical acclaim.

In September 1961 he was the laureate winner in the category 'Artists under 35' at the 2nd Paris Biennale for his painting *The Last Supper*, and was awarded a scholarship which allowed him to remain in Paris.

The Biennale was established in 1959 by the author and journalist Raymond Cogniat, a great admirer of Sadequain's, and in October 1962 wrote the following in *Le Figaro*: "*His grand compositions in black and white demonstrate*

Judgement in Paris,
1962
Private collection,
Dubai

Opposite
The Last Supper,
1960

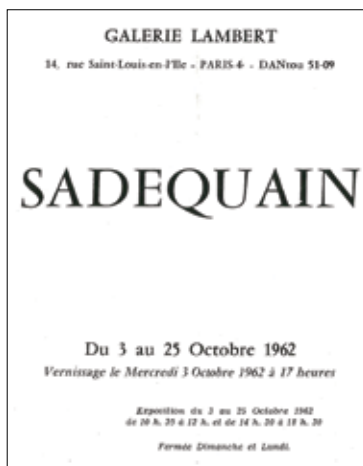


what close links exist between this art and its traditional sources, notably calligraphy, whose influence the artist himself recognises. The abstract art thus takes on the value of a mysterious language. On this secret significance of the manuscript, Sadequain adds up the impression of space, density, volume and the reality of matter, which transforms an abstract thought into a material fact in plastic."

The years following the Biennale (1961–1964) were amongst the busiest and most successful for Sadequain. He held solo-shows in Paris, the USA and London (New Vision Centre Gallery, Commonwealth Institute Galleries, and in 1965 as part of the Commonwealth Arts Festival at the Royal Academy of Arts), as well as returning to Pakistan intermittently for municipal commissions.

Letters from the artist in Paris to his family in Pakistan, published in 1979, are mentioned by Iftikar Dadi in his book *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia*. From his correspondence it is clear that Sadequain found great success in Paris in his early years. He also had gallery representation, as well as regular patrons in Paris. Despite the successes, Paris Post War was in a depression with food rationing and his personal life in the French capital was difficult. In May 1964 he wrote that he had no exhibitions scheduled, and in February 1965 that his gallery had been sold due to the death of its financial backer, and that it was to be turned into a bar. He also found French difficult to master, and like many artists lived a hand to mouth existence.

Sadequain,
Galerie Lambert,
October 1962



The Welcomed Stranger

1964 saw Sadequain awarded one of the most important and challenging commissions of his years in Paris, the illustration of Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*. Albert Camus was a French author, journalist and philosopher and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957. Originally published in 1942, *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger/The Outsider*), was his first novel and opens with the famous line; "*Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas*", (*Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know*). It is considered a classic of French literature and in 1999 was voted number 1 in *Le Monde's* list of the 100 greatest books of the 20th century.

In 1964, four years after Camus' untimely death in a car accident, Sadequain was commissioned to produce a series of lithographs for the special edition of the book. It was published in October 1966 by 'Les Bibliophiles de l'Automobile-Club de France', a society founded by the early motoring pioneer the Marquise de Dion in 1895, and which began publishing artist's books in 1925.

The book was published in a green bound numbered limited edition of 150 copies, printed on vélin de Rives, with 130 copies dedicated to members of the Club. The remaining 20 copies were numbered A to T. In addition there were 12 bound suites of coloured prints on Japan nacré paper, 12 bound suites of colored prints on vélin de Hollande, and 10 bound suites of the black

Left
Detail from
*'Mother's Friends,
Were Coming In'*
(No. 1)

Right
Detail from
*Meursault, Marie
and Raymond, on
the way to the beach*
(No. 7)



and white lithographs printed on vélin de Rives. Sadequain created the 22 colour lithographs, and a number of monochrome prints to illustrate key scenes in the book. All of the editions were printed by the Paris atelier of Jacques Desjobert. Founded by his father Edmond Desjobert, they printed for Picasso, Dali, Chagall and Matisse.

L'Étranger was launched in Paris on the 27 October 1966 at a gala dinner held at the Place de la Concorde. The lithograph menu for that dinner was also illustrated by Sadequain, and features an image of Meursault, Marie and Raymond that does not appear in the book.

This commission was the high point of his career in Paris and he worked very hard on it, as recounted in his letters and the number of studies he produced for the series. A large number of sketches and preparatory works featuring scenes from the book survive, showing the development of his ideas and forms over time. In *Mother's Friends, Were Coming In* (No. 1) we see not only the detailed preparatory drawing for the final work, but also his classification of artistic styles; photographic, artistic and abstract (No 2).

Whilst the commission did not lead to further commercial success in Paris, the importance of these works in Sadequain's oeuvre cannot be overstated. The decision to award Sadequain the commission was a bold move by the committee, showing just how integrated into Parisian artistic society Sadequain was, as well as how highly regarded he had become.



Editions Mystique

Another major, although often overlooked body of work created during this period were the sketches and drawings produced in Karachi and Paris in May–June 1966 for the publication '*Sadequain, Sketches and Drawings: Editions Mystique*'. This was a book published in Karachi of sixty-eight drawings by the artist, with a forward by Faiz Ahmad Faiz (fully printed at the back of this catalogue).

These exquisite works depict a number of the artist's characteristic themes, such as cacti, nesting crows, heads, crucified figures, men and women trapped in webs, as well as self-portraits and images of the decapitated artist with his muse. This body of work would later be the basis of a 1969 deluxe edition of Sadequain's interpretations of Ghalib, another crucial influence on the artist throughout his life.

Akbar Naqvi comments; "*The point to remember is the centrality of the 1966 drawings to Sadequain's critique of the self as well as society This was an art of extreme affront, and nothing like this had been seen before in Pakistan or in India.*"

"His men and women, wrung out of shape and contour, are scattered as chaff in the whirl-wind of their own creation, are the ugly testimony to the irony of fate they had hoped was their destiny."

Mazhar Yusuf

Study for
'Meursault in
Prison', c 1965
Private collection,
Dubai



As Faiz Ahmad Faiz mentions in his introduction; *"The most obvious feature of the work displayed in this book, however, is Sadequain's virtuosity in whatever medium he operated and his varied and eclectic idiom based on a wealth of sources, from medieval calligraphy to modern posters, from classical sculpture to modern expressionism."* A statement which summarises Sadequain's artistic output during his Parisian period.

By the time *L'Étranger* was published in October 1966 Sadequain's stay in Paris was drawing to an end. In late 1966 he executed a mural for the Paris offices of Pakistan International Airways, for which he received part-payment in airline tickets.

He was still supported by a number of patrons, and following the PIA commission was amassing a body of work which was to form part of a major exhibition in Rouen. From his letters we see that he was reading a great deal, composing quatrains, and was feeling inspired towards a new, socially progressive artistic form. Sadequain's large scale works painted in late 1966/early 1967 depict heavily stylised figures in broad sweeping lines, bearing more influence of the École de Paris, and aesthetic features seen in the work of Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Jean-Michel Atlan (No's 18–23). These works are more akin to his murals than the work produced earlier on in his career, and aesthetic parallels can be drawn between the two. These are works which Dr Salman Ahmad believes belong to the so called 'Lost Exhibition', a show which was to take place in Rouen in 1967.

Detail from
After the Crucifixion II,
1966
(No. 13)



However, this coincided with his father's visit, who fell ill and Sadequain accompanied him home, never to return to Paris. In the process abandoning all his work.

Sadequain recounts the events of 1967 in his letters: *"Father was in poor health during his visit to Paris. Still, he insisted that I continue with my plans to travel to Rouen, as I had to deliver a number of heavy portfolios of my work and attend an opening. Upon arriving at the train platform, I found out that the train was delayed. If the train had arrived on time, I would have occupied my seat and proceeded. While waiting, I became restless and decided that while exhibitions will continue to happen in future, it is not right for me to leave my father in ill health alone. I impulsively decided to accompany him to Baghdad. . . . The airline officials had assured me that they would escort my father to his home in Karachi. But the issue of visiting the holy shrines during the return journey from Paris remained unresolved. For this reason, I decided to accompany him through his ziarat, and then return to Paris from Baghdad. . . . On the second day in Baghdad, after being blessed, father was fully recovered. While his seat was being confirmed for his return trip to Karachi, he said, "Son! You have come as far as here [Baghdad], why not come along to Karachi?" and that is how I returned to Karachi with him."*

Detail from
The Webbed XIX,
1966
(No. 14)



Upon his return to Pakistan he continued working and soon found nation-wide admiration and appreciation for his work. His mural painting started in earnest, and he increasingly moved towards calligraphic compositions. Sadequain would never return to Paris; however the years spent there were to impact heavily on the rest of his career. His Parisian years could well be described at the zenith of his life as an artist, where subject and technical ability combined, producing an extraordinary body of work.



PLATES

[1] *Mother's Friends,*
Were Coming In, c.1965

Pen and ink and graphite on card
50.2 x 32.5 cm. (19 3/4 x 11 3/4 in.)

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist in
October 1966 by Georges Lesieur,
Superintendent, Les Bibliophiles de
l'Automobile Club de France, Paris

[2] *Untitled (Stylistic studies),*
c.1965

Pen and ink on card
50.2 x 32.5 cm. (19 3/4 x 11 3/4 in.)

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist in
October 1966 by Georges Lesieur, Paris

[3] Title page for
Mother's Friends, Were
Coming In, c.1965

Pen and ink on card
50.2 x 32.5 cm. (19 3/4 x 11 3/4 in.)

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist in
October 1966 by Georges Lesieur, Paris

[4] *Untitled (Study for
Meursault's Demon)*, c.1966

Gouache, ink and graphite on card
31.8 x 25.3 cm. (12 1/2 x 10 in.)

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist in
October 1966 by Georges Lesieur, Paris

This original gouache, pen and ink illustration by Sadequain shows a distraught looking Meursault surrounded by a halo of red and orange whilst a monstrous figure hovers over his body with its claws clutching at him. Whilst in court the red cloaked prosecutor described Meursault as lacking any human attributes and brands him a man with no soul. This image is richly allegorical with broken and discarded crucifixes littering the floor. Meursault is confronted throughout part two of *L'Étranger* with the Christian faith; Christianity being a religion that attempts to give rational order and system to the world, its creation and meaning, it goes directly against Camus' philosophy of the absurd and the meaningless of human life.

*'...the horror I feel when I look at the face
of this man in whom I can distinguish
nothing that is not monstrous.'*



[5] *Untitled (Meursault
at his Window), 1966*

Gouache on card
Signed and dated '27.X.66' lower left
32 x 25 cm. (12 ³/₈ x 9 ⁷/₈ in.)

Provenance:

Acquired directly from the artist on the
27 October 1966 by Maurice Schlogel, Paris
Private collection, India

This work is the original gouache from
which the series of lithographs were
produced for the 1966 edition of *L'Étranger*.

This work by Sadequain depicts the scene
from Camus' *L'Étranger* when Meursault
has spent his Sunday, a day of the week he
likes the least, watching the main street of
his neighbourhood from his balcony. After
a beautiful afternoon during which he
observed young families out walking and
later young men hurrying to catch the tram
to the local cinema, the protagonist watches
from a distance as the streets become
deserted. With the room bathed in an
orange end of day glow Sadequain illustrates
Meursault looking contemplatively out to a
clear but darkened sky which is met by a tree
lined pavement and a sole black cat lingering
in the empty road.

The figure standing inside the room
shows not just his physical but also his
emotional detachment from society and
his environment; it exemplifies Meursault's
non-conformist attitude to society by
refusing to live and enjoy life similarly to the
people he watches. Further, the 'deserted'
streets in this illustration mimic Meursault's
current nihilist state of mind; as the evening
depicted draws to an end he reflects how
despite his mother's recent death;

*'...when all was said and done, nothing had
really changed.'*



[6] *Untitled (Meursault
and Marie in the Sea), 1966*

Gouache on card
Signed and dated '27.X.66' lower right
32.3 x 25cm. (12 ³/₄ x 9 ⁷/₈ in.)

Provenance:

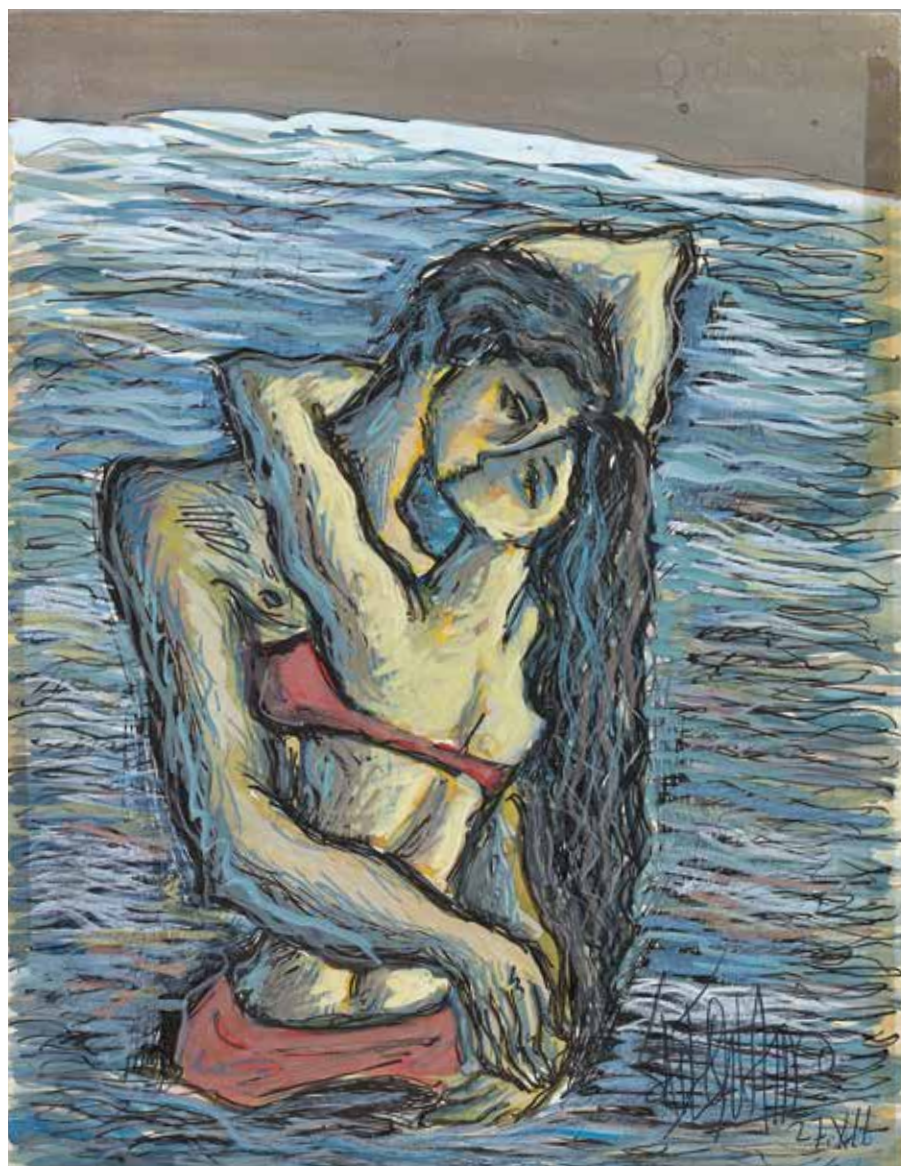
Acquired directly from the artist on the
27 October 1966 by Maurice Schlogel, Paris
Private collection, India

This work is the original gouache
from which the series of lithographs
were produced for the 1966 edition of
L'Étranger.

Sadequain shows Meursault and Marie
embracing in the sea. The characters find
themselves alone on the beach during a
day trip to a friend's wooden chalet in the
suburbs of Algiers. Meursault and Marie
Cardona, a typist who previously worked
in Meursault's office, shared a mutual
attraction whilst working together. A
chance meeting at the public swimming
pool the day after his mother's funeral
marks the beginning of their romantic
and physical relationship. The timing
of which is later suggested to be
inappropriate given his mother's death;
this is one of the examples of Meursault
expressing 'dubious morality' and none of
the usual emotions attributed to grief.

This passionate clinch illustrated by
Sadequain draws attention to the
protagonist's concentration on the
physical world. Camus asserts throughout
L'Étranger that there is no higher meaning
or order to life; this is referenced here by
focussing on the protagonists' own body
and his physical relationship with Marie
rather than depicting the emotional or
social aspects of the world around them.

*'...she pressed her body against mine.
I felt her legs wrapped around mine
and I wanted her.'*



[7] *Untitled (Meursault, Marie and Raymond, on the way to the beach), 1966*

Lithograph on paper
Signed and dated '27.X.66' lower right
A list of club members and the menu served at the gala event are printed inside
32.5 x 25.2 cm. (12 6/8 x 10 in.)

Provenance:

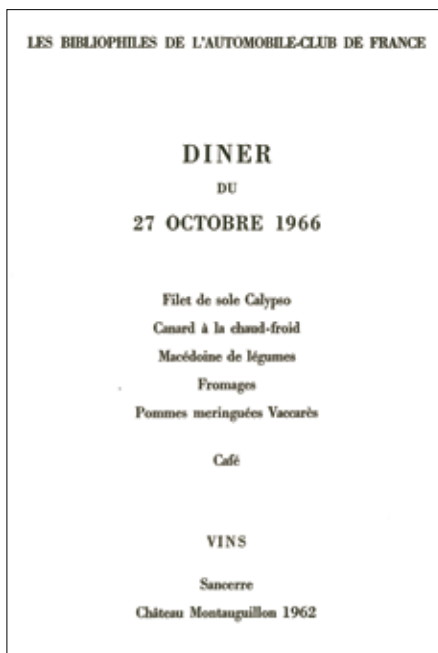
Acquired by Georges Lesieur from the gala event celebrating the release of *L'Étranger*, 27 October 1966

This is the cover illustration of the menu served on the 27 October 1966 at the gala dinner to commemorate the publication of Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* by Les Bibliophiles de l'Automobile Club de France.

This work shows Meursault with an arm around Marie and his new friend Raymond to the left hand side. The three are making their way to the suburbs of Algiers to a friend's chalet on the beach. It is at this point, whilst outside their building, the Arab brother of Raymond's mistress is seen watching them from a distance; this could be why Raymond appears to be ushering the two away.

Marie is shown wearing a white dress and Meursault comments on her beauty; the character came to represent the pleasant aspects of life that Meursault is rarely depicted as enjoying. Here, with an affectionate hand placed on her shoulder the character momentarily appears romantic and a sentimental streak is shown.

"I told her she was beautiful; she laughed and sounded pleased."



Menu served on 27 October 1966



[8] Sadequain's illustrations for
Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*

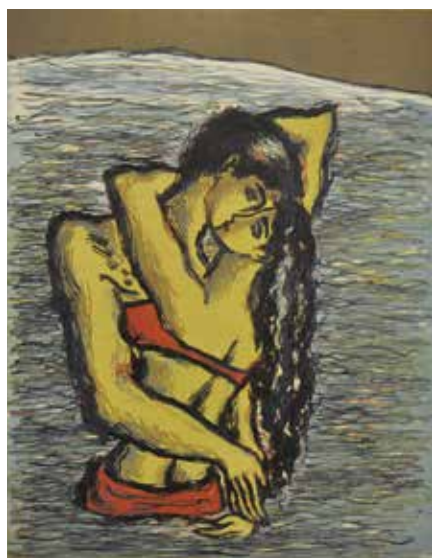
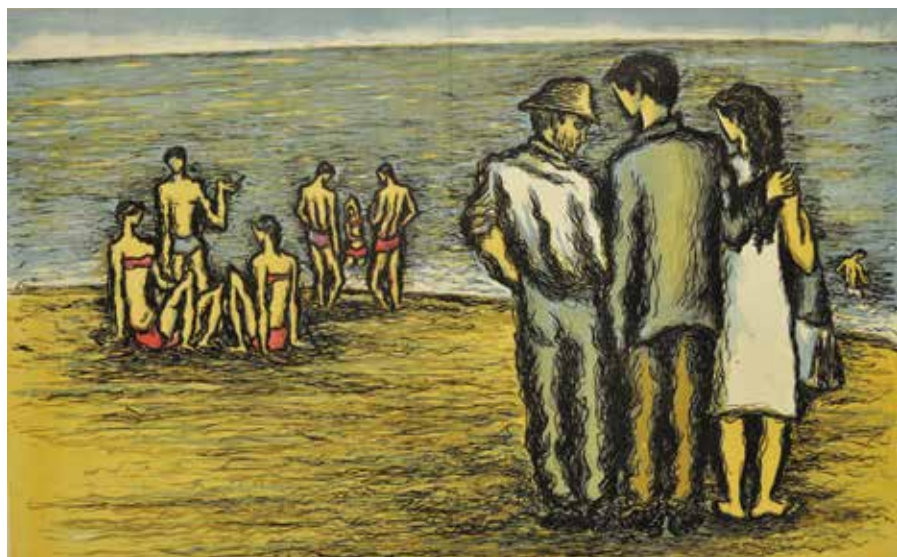
22 lithographs on vélin de Rives paper,
from an edition of 12

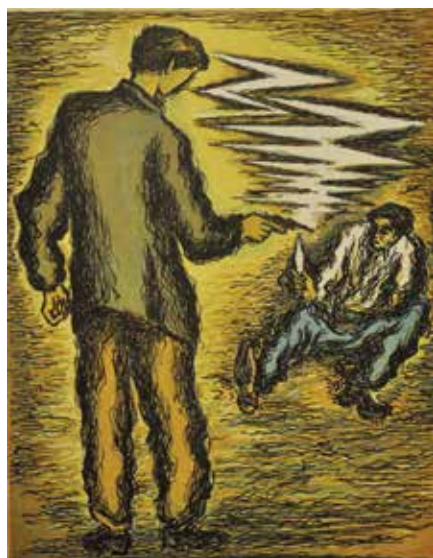
Nineteen: 32.5 x 25.7 cm. (12 ³/₄ x 10 ¹/₈ in.)

Three: 32.5 x 50.5 cm. (12 ³/₄ x 19 ⁷/₈ in.)















[9] Sadequain's illustrations for
Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*

12 lithographs on vélin de Rives paper,
from an edition of 10
Various sizes

I







II



[10] *The Webbed XVIII, 1966*

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated '10.5.66' lower right,
verso with titled pen and ink drawing
Delphine et Hippolyte après Baudelaire,
1966
72.6 x 52.8 cm. (28 1/2 x 20 1/2 in.)

Provenance:

The Forges collection, Paris
Kito and Jane de Boer collection, London

Published:

Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,
Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p. 75

This striking self-portrait shows the
artist kneeling with his back arched
and his arms pointing to the heavens.
His hands have been magnified and
are tightly bound by coiled snakes,
representative of the constraints of
society upon man's creativity.



Verso



[11] *Standing Self-Portrait
with Crown of Thorns, 1966*

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated '66' lower right
70.5 x 51 cm. (27 ³/₄ x 20 ¹/₁₆ in.)

Provenance:

The Forges collection, Paris

Kito and Jane de Boer collection, London

In this work from the series *Sar Ba Kaff* the angular composition fills the space with pointed elbows and knees. This work was inspired by Sadequain's fascination with the lives of transgressive Sufis, in particular Sarmad, an enigmatic seventeenth century figure associated with the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh. Following Dara Shikoh's defeat to Aurangzeb, Sarmad was executed by the new ruler on a charge of heresy. Upon his beheading in 1661 Sarmad's unearthly spiritual powers came to light when his headless body began walking, carrying his severed head in its hands.

It is interesting to note that the figure's hands are clearly contorted into a calligraphic form. This was a common aesthetic feature used throughout Sadequain's oeuvre where the twisted fingers form the word 'Allah' in Urdu.



[12] *After the Crucifixion I*,
1966

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated 3.5.66 lower right
71.3 x 51 cm. (28 1/8 x 20 1/8 in.)

Provenance:
Private collection, Paris

Published:
Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,
Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p. 31

*'Flitting across this world we see a
Christ-like figure, perhaps meant to be
autobiographical, his body one with
thorns, his head encircled by the crown
of atrophied oblivion.'*
Faiz Ahmad Faiz

The figure here is completely entwined in a dense mesh of thorny cacti, so much so that it is difficult to ascertain where he ends and the plants begin. The composition builds to a crescendo in the upper portion of the scene, where the Christ-like figure bursts through the top of the plant, his arms failing wildly, his fingers spiked with thorns. The roundness of the cacti and monumentality of the figure lend this image a very sculptural quality, and depending on your outlook this could either represent the triumph of human nature over adversity, or the slow encroachment of time overtaking the figure.



[13] *After the Crucifixion II*,
1966

Pen and ink on paper
50.6 x 71.7cm. (20 1/8 x 28 1/4 in.)

Provenance:
Private collection, Paris

Published:
Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,
Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p. 33

In this graphic image, Sadequain's head has been removed by the figure to the left of the scene, who has collected his blood in a bowl which is being offered to the Christ-like figure in the centre of the composition. Akbar Naqvi comments that in Sadequain's *After the Crucifixion* series that the impression of morbidity is closely related to the artist's attitude towards life. He continues by saying;

'There were other crucifixions in the 1966 book which were done with very unusual lines as if from the fibres of the artist's own body, and woven into soft, monumental sculptural images The crucified did not rise to heaven but stayed put on the ground in pain and suffering to stigmatise authority.'



[14] *The Webbed XIX, 1966*

Pen and ink on paper

Signed and dated '5.5.66' lower left

50 x 71 cm. (19 11/16 x 27 15/16 in.)

Provenance:

Private collection, Paris

Published:

Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,

Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p. 77

Izaj ul-Hassan, *Painting in Pakistan*,

Lahore, 1996, p. 83

'Sadequain has once more reverted to direct social comment to depict a loveless and macabre world – a world of the scarecrow acting as the Lord of blood-thirsty crows, of the harridan decked out as a beauty queen, a world of debased flesh and servile manners.'

Faiz Ahmad Faiz



[15] *Head VI, 1966*

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated '4.5.66' lower right
64.2 x 51.5 cm. (25 1/4 x 20 1/4 in.)

Provenance:
Private collection, Paris

Published:
Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,
Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p. 23

In this stunning self-portrait we see the artist staring straight at the viewer with dark, hollowed eyes. Sadequain's head is encircled with a crown of thorny cacti, hatched and cross-hatched, thicker than cactus bushes, showing the artist in perfect symbiosis with his characteristic subject. The image presented is totemic and monolithic in style, the elongated neck and flat face reminiscent of Modigliani's men and women. Akbar Naqvi describes Sadequain's works from this series as 'line paintings', which would later go on to inspire Bashir Mirza.



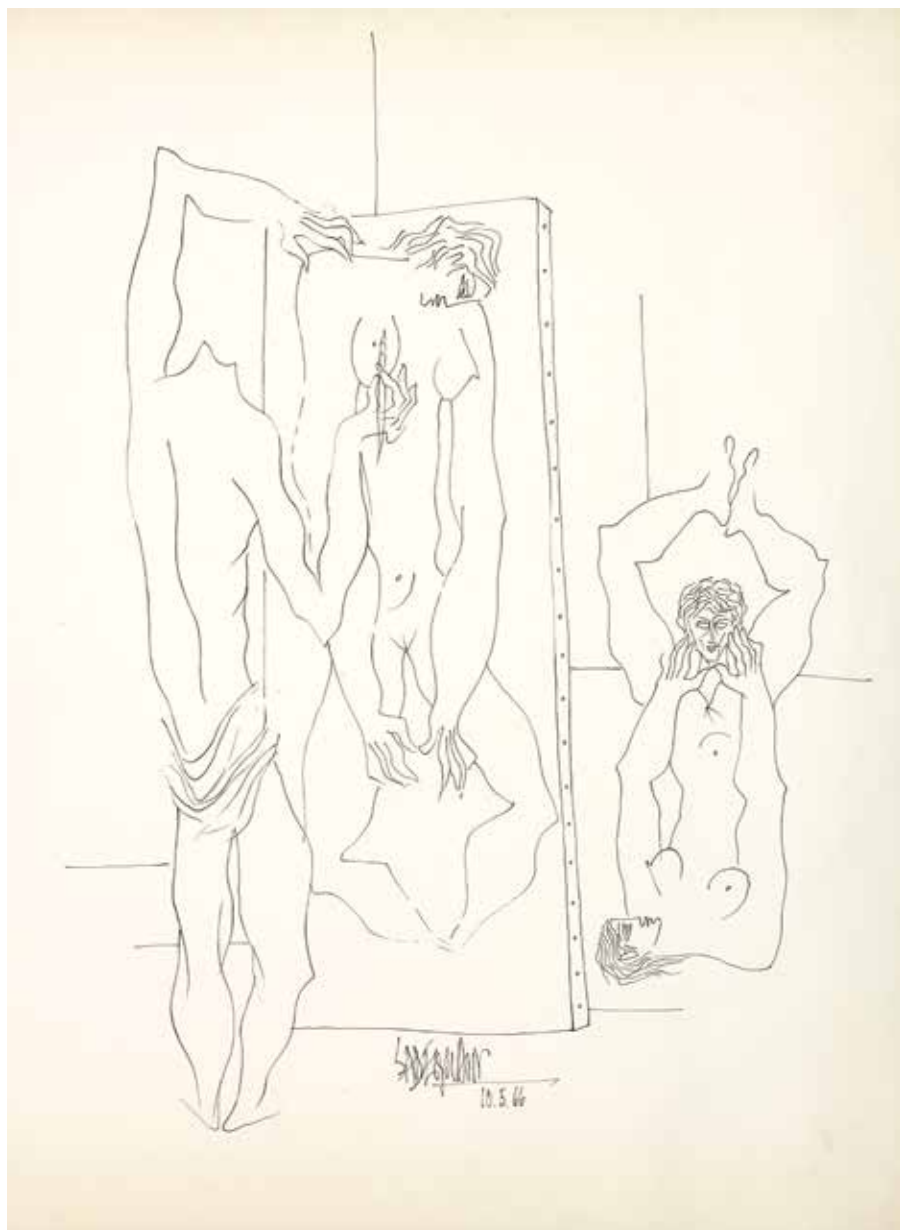
[16] *Artist and the Model VII*,
1966

Pen and ink on paper
Signed and dated '10.5.66' lower centre
68.1 x 51 cm. (26 ¹³/₁₆ x 20 ¹/₈ in.)

Provenance:
Private collection, Paris

Published:
Sadequain: Sketches and Drawings,
Editions Mystique, Karachi, 1966, p.119

Here Sadequain's head is held in the hands of the model in a fairly provocative position, whilst the headless body paints the scene behind a large canvas. One possible interpretation of the scene is that the female figure is giving birth to the artist, who is in turn creating her image. Once again inspired by the story of Sarmad, the work is reminiscent of Picasso's Vollard Suite in terms of its use of simple lines and narrative imagery. Faiz Ahmad Faiz recollected; '*... when he drew women [his] line became wondrously simple, lithe and lyrical. Sadequain's male figures were trapped in lethal webs, but his nudes were musical notes or sur sangeeta.*' Naqvi adds; '*The nude with the decapitated head of the artist in hand, and the headless artist painting her were the living conventions of the ghazal transferred to art.*'



[17] Seven signed prints from
*Sadequain: Sketches and
Drawings, Editions Mystique*,
Karachi, 1966

Works shown:

Head IV, ed. 6/90

Head V, ed. 1/90

Head VI, ed. 1/90

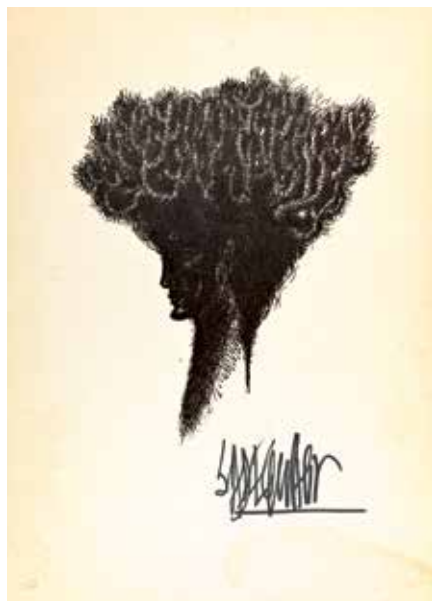
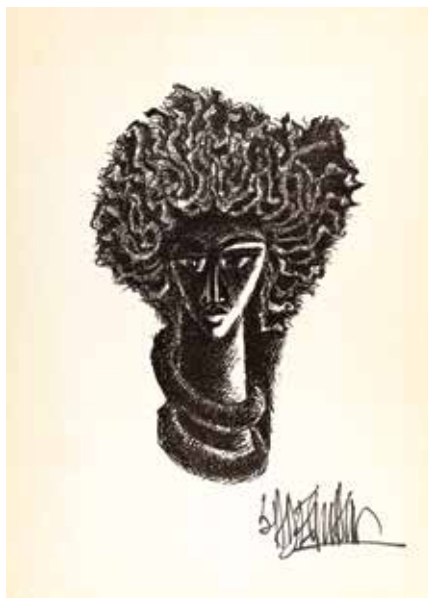
The Webbed VI, ed. 12/90

The Webbed XIX, ed. 19/90

After the Crucifixion I, ed. 11/90

Sar-Ba-Kaff II, ed. 10/90

Each 32.8 x 25 cm. (12 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.)





[18] *Three Figures, 1967*

Oil on canvas

Signed, dated '19/1/67', titled and inscribed 'Painted at Paris' verso
179 x 120 cm. (70 1/2 x 47 1/4 in.)

Provenance:

The Dutilleul family collection, Paris

The following works were purchased in the late 1960s by the famous Parisian collectors the Dutilleul family. These works, painted in Paris in late 1966 and early 1967 depict characteristic Parisian scenes in a palette of greys, blues and burnt ochres. The combination of colours with the scratches made by Sadequain is a continuation of his technique from the late 1950s. These works however mark a departure to a more fluid and abstract style, nevertheless determined by human scale and figurative elements. This looseness is the result of Sadequain living and working in Paris and the rubbing of shoulders with artists of the École de Paris such as Pierre Soulages, Serge Poliakoff, Henri Michaux and Jean-Michel Atlan etc.



[19] *Untitled, 1967*

Oil on canvas

Signed lower right

179 x 120 cm. (70 1/2 x 47 1/4 in.)

Provenance:

The Dutilleul family collection, Paris



[20] *Two Figures (no.6), 1966*

Oil on canvas

Signed, dated '11/11/66', titled and
inscribed 'Painted at Paris' verso
115 x 90 cm. (45 ¹/₄ x 35 ¹/₂ in.)

Provenance:

The Dutilleul family collection, Paris



[21] *Two Standing Figures, 1966*

Oil on canvas

Signed, dated '23/09/66', titled and
inscribed 'Painted at Paris' verso

115 x 90 cm. (45 ¹/₄ x 35 ¹/₂ in.)

Provenance:

The Dutilleul family collection, Paris



[22] *Acrobats, 1966*

Oil on canvas, diptych
Each signed, dated '22/10/66'
and '10/9/66', titled and inscribed
'Painted at Paris' verso
Each: 90 x 115 cm. (35 1/2 x 45 in.)
Total: 90 x 230 cm. (35 1/2 x 90 1/2 in.)

Provenance:
The Dutilleul family collection, Paris

This diptych shows the trailing legs and
arms of circus acrobats. The forms are
influenced by Picasso's and Matisse's
depictions of dancers and circus folk.





[23] *Birds, 1966*

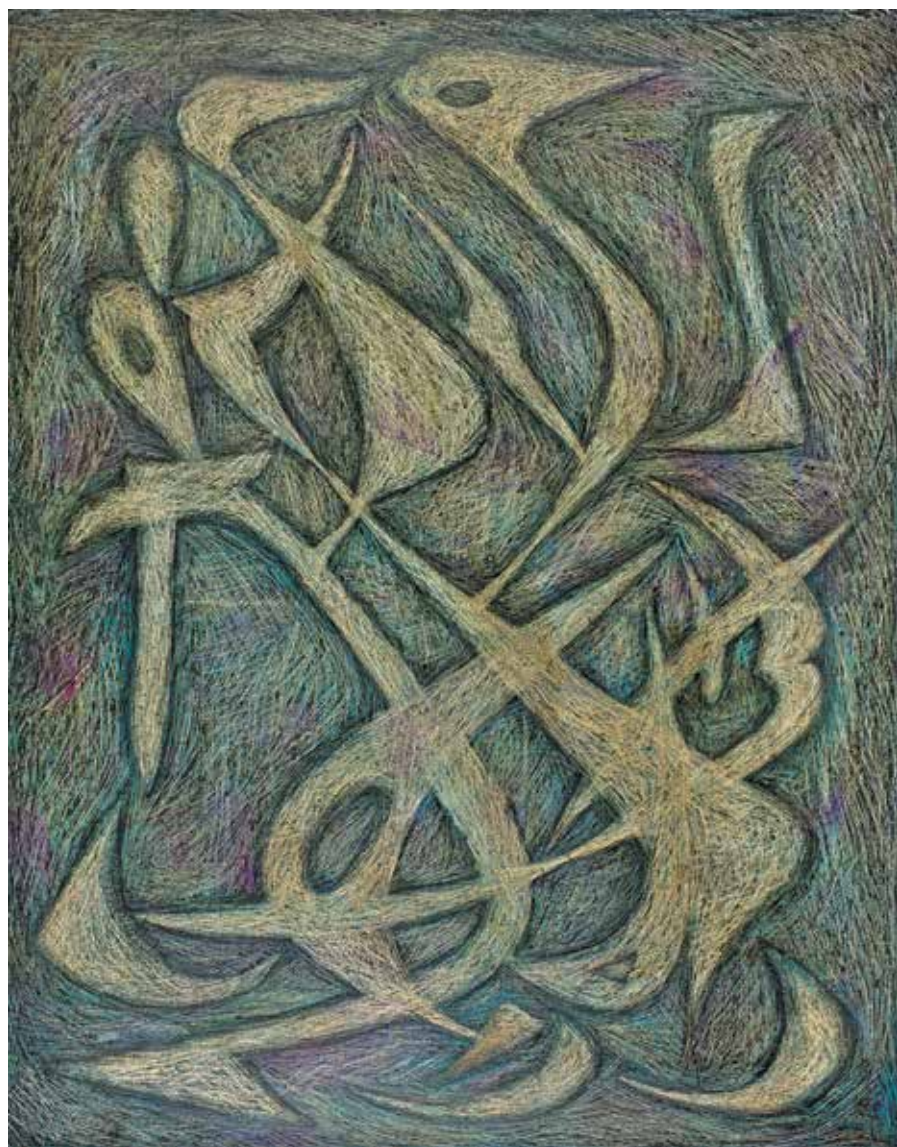
Oil on canvas

Signed, dated 1/10/66, titled and
inscribed 'Painted at Paris' verso
115 x 90 cm. (45 x 35 1/2 in.)

Provenance:

The Dutilleul family collection, Paris

The birds in this work bear a striking
resemblance to Chagall's depictions of
the same subject from the 1960s.



APPENDIX

Publisher's note, *Editions Mystique*

"Sadequain is a philosopher-artist, a poet and a lovable companion. As an artist, he is particularly known for the forcefulness of the lines and mastery of drawings. His work is an indelible satire on the raging conflict between our 'morality' and our failure to adjust to the social change going on around.

"In the present series of sketches he is trying to make us painfully conscious of this conflict. Sadequain feels that man is not the same as he was.

"Man survived the ages as he adapted himself to nature and mastered the primitive world. But now, due to his own modern discoveries and inventions, he is getting out of gear with the world of his own thought, experimentation and creation. His nervous system is being strained to its limits. Sadequain sees this and shows this.

"His men and women, wrung out of shape and contour, are scattered as chaff in the whirl-wind of their own creation, are the ugly testimony to the irony of fate they had hoped was their destiny. This mastery of depiction gives Sadequain a ranking amongst the unforgettable artists of the world of today and tomorrow."

Mazhar Yusuf, Karachi

1 September 1966

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APPENDIX

Preface (*Editions Mystique*)

"In spite of his considerable pre-occupation with the solution of technical formal problems, Sadequain has never been a purely formal painter. Recordist, abstractionist, social critic, emotional visionary, within a few short years, Sadequain has sped from one role or compulsion to another with equal impetuosity. Although the still centre round which his creative vocabulary will eventually stabilise is, perhaps, as yet difficult to foresee, some aspects of his work both formal and thematic, appear long past the interim phase. The articulate line, calligraphed, woven, chased, or tapestried, the muted colour stemming from darkness rather than light, the thirst to drain cup of ever newfound image to the last, the suffering without the pity and the agony without the ecstasy appear too enduring to depart.

"Retrospectively he began quietly enough painting living things as appearances, but even then, in selection and treatment, he was more of a commentator than a mere naturalist. From things phenomenal, he chose only those which were alive and trying to 'kick' however, ineffectually. And in his social community the only living ones are those who suffer. For they are the only ones who toil – the camel, the ox, the hewer of wood, the drawer of water, the famished cactus, the root under the stone. And to paint the figure together with its suffering obviously dictated a distortion of visual appearance, a juxtaposition of the conceptual and the material. Naturally enough in Sadequain's work of this period, the composition is not entirely unself-conscious and the colour treatment is at times somewhat conventional, but evidence of formal control and intellectual commitment is already unmistakable.

“Then with the commencement of his phantasmagoric exploration of form and substance, there emerges a series of abstract visual statements, strong and subtle, stripping anatomising and recreating the skeletal forms beneath the visual flesh – skeletons of streets and cities, weeds and plants, men and women. In the process, he also evolved a new social and emotional credo of the essential unity of material things, all caught in the agonising toils of an evolutionary process of struggle goading them upwards. And now, since his return from Paris, Sadequain has once more reverted to direct social comment to depict a loveless and macabre world – a world of the scarecrow acting as the Lord of blood-thirsty crows, of the harrikan decked out as a beauty queen, a world of debased flesh and servile manners. Flitting across this world we see a Christ-like figure, perhaps meant to be autobiographical, his body one with thorns, his head encircled by the crown of atrophied oblivion.

“This bitter vision of reality may not be the whole truth but it is certainly a part of it and if some of those immediately confronted with the hypocrisy and the heartlessness of a particular environment fail to own the hope beyond the despair, the failure is not entirely theirs. That Sadequain is not unaware of the hope is borne by his huge canvas, rather stylised and deliberately contrived though it is depicting the conflict of peaceful forces and their antagonists.

“The most obvious feature of the work displayed in this book, however, is Sadequain’s virtuosity in whatever medium he operated and his varied and eclectic idiom based on a wealth of sources, from medieval calligraphy to modern posters, from classical sculpture to modern expressionism.”

Faiz Ahmad Faiz

EXHIBITIONS

- 1986 Frere Hall, Karachi
- 1985 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1982 Ghalib Academy, New Delhi
- 1982 Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow
- 1982 Urdu Ghar, Hyderabad
- 1982 Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi
- 1982 Aligarh University, Aligarh
- 1981 Paintings and Drawings, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi
- 1977 'Poetry of Iqbal' Lahore Museum, Lahore
- 1976 Punjab Arts Council, Lahore
- 1975-76 Khana-e-Aftab Gallery, Tehran, Iran
- 1975 State Fine Art Gallery, Ankara, Turkey
- 1975 State Museum of Fine Arts, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- 1975 Hall of Union Painters, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 1975 State Museum of Oriental Arts, Moscow
- 1975 Sala Ateneului Român, Bucharest, Romania
- 1974 October to December, Dubai, UAE; Abu Dhabi, UAE; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Museum of Cairo, Egypt; Beirut, Lebanon; Damascus, Syria; Amman, Jordan; National Gallery of Kuwait; Baghdad, Iraq
- 1972 'Air Mail Edition', Lahore Museum, Lahore
- 1973 Liaqat Memorial Hall, Rawalpindi
- 1972 Arts Council, Karachi
- 1972 Lahore Museum, Lahore
- 1970 State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi
- 1969-70 Painting and Poetry, Arts Council, Karachi
- 1968 PIA Foyer (Barbed Wire/Reflection/Twenty Five verses of Ghalib series), Karachi
- 1968 Exhibition of murals, Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore
- 1967 Planned exhibition in Rouen

- 1966 Place de la Concorde, Paris (publication of L'Étranger)
- 1966 Comptoir Swiss, Lausanne, Switzerland
- 1966 State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi
- 1966 Hotel Continental, Karachi
- 1965 Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore
- 1965 Arts Council Gallery, Karachi
- 1965 Musée Macon, Macon
- 1965 Casino de Charbonnières
- 1965 Musée Casino, Dieppe
- 1965 Château-Musée, Annecy
- 1965 Palais de la Méditerranée, Cannes
- 1965 Nouran Le Havre
- 1964 Galerie Presbourg, Paris
- 1964 Galerie Kléber, Paris (possibly)
- 1963 New Vision Centre, London
- 1963 Commonwealth Institute Galleries, London
- 1963 Henri Gallery, Washington
- 1962 Galerie Mona Lisa, Paris
- 1962 Galerie Lambert, Paris
- 1962 Musée Maison du Culture, Le Havre
- 1958 Quetta Fine Arts Society, Quetta
- 1957 Frere Hall, Karachi
- 1955 Residence of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Karachi, Pakistan
- 1954 Quetta Town Hall, Quetta

Group shows

- 1963 '5th Salon' Musee d'Arte Moderne, Paris
- 1961 Paris Biennale
- 1960 All Pakistan National Exhibition of Paintings (awarded first prize)

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS DURING HIS LIFETIME

Rubaiyat-e-Sadequain, Karachi, 1970

Editions Mystique: Sadequain, Sketches and Drawings,
Karachi, 1966

L'Étranger, Albert Camus, Les Bibliophiles de L'Automobile
Club de France, October 1966

REFERENCES

Naqvi, Akbar, *Image and Identity: Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan*, Karachi, 1998

Hassan, Ijaz ul, *Painting in Pakistan*, Lahore 1996

Dadi, Iftikhar, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia*, North Carolina, 2010

Sadequain Foundation, *Realism to Calligraphic Cubism*, California, 2011

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