

Received : 10 January 2024, Accepted: 15 April 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.90>

## **Analytical Study of Expression in the Abstract Paintings of Jackson Pollock and Asim Amjad**

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### **Abstract**

Abstract Expressionism a modern art movement of 20<sup>th</sup> century West has its influence on the art worldwide. Modern painting in Pakistani has developed with major inspiration from Western artists. Abstract painting is known for its boldness, freedom of expression, and non-representational forms. Asim Amjad an abstract expressionist from Pakistan is a psychologist, whose artworks show a great semblance to the works of Jackson Pollock. Delving into the unconscious, both these artists reveal their inside through spontaneous strokes. This research presents a comparative analysis between the works of these two artists, with the main emphasis on expression and abstraction.

Abstract Expressionism emerged in the United States in response to the social and political chaos resulting from the World War II. The article explores concepts of this art movement, in addition to investigation of artistic expression, gestural technique of painting, as well as selection and application of color and form to communicate meaning

and emotion. The research provides detailed analysis of Abstract Expressionist paintings on contemporary art.

Abstract Expressionism transformed the global art scene by preferring artist's expression, and action or gestural painting. It aroused in a historical, political, and cultural context, leaving a long-term impression on evolution of contemporary art worldwide. The analysis of gestural painting with respect to Pakistani artist "Asim Amjad" offers a noteworthy contribution to the scholarship of Pakistani art, besides paying tribute to the artist.

**Keywords:** Abstract Expressionism, Jackson Pollock, Asim Amjad, Abstract Figurative Art, Expressionist Canvases, Figurative Expressionism.

## **Introduction**

Abstract Expressionism is among one of the most significant art trends in the history of American art. Abstract Expressionist paintings are usually executed on large scale. This emphasizes the physicality of the creative process and offers an immersive experience to the audience. The influences of this style are not only observed in the West but in South Asia as well. In Pakistan, this style has been adopted by many leading artists.

An essential component of Abstract Expressionism was color and its application. Bold gestural application of vivid colors is frequently employed by artists to express their feelings or ideas. Color was used to provoke viewer's feelings as well. Every artist of

Abstract Expressionism employed a different style of expression, and there was no single unified style to characterize the works of Abstract Expressionists.

In Abstract Expressionism, the technique known as “Action Painting” was popularized by American artist Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). This technique entailed the dynamic and frequently impromptu or unplanned application of paint on canvas, involving spontaneous gestures and actions of the artist. Famously, Pollock used a “drip” technique in which paint was allowed to drip or be poured directly onto the canvas. In general, Abstract Expressionism resulted in a radical change in how artists created their work and how people saw art. Its contributions have had a long-lasting effect on the world of contemporary art and are relevant today in Pakistan as well.

A pioneer modern artist of Pakistan Ismail Gulgee (1926-2007) is known as action painter of Pakistan because of his gestural strokes in calligraphic paintings. His expressive style became an inspiration for many artists. Asim Amjad (b.1970), a Lahore-based psychologist and art therapist, does not have a background of Fine Arts. His interest in painting led him to learn painting privately and began exhibiting it professionally in 1997(personal communication, December 25, 2023). The expressive and bold style of his paintings is remarkably appealing. In spite of an impressive expressionism, his works are not as recognized as the works of the artists with degree in Fine Arts.

The objective of this research is to investigate the role of unconscious and conscious with respect to expressive techniques of Pollock and Amjad. In terms of creative practice both these artists have made several important contributions to the area

of painting in their respective time. The distinctive vision and personal expression of each artist is highly valued in the article. The comparative analysis investigates their feelings, ideas, and experiences.

Abstract Expressionism was a diverse and dynamic movement that prioritized individual expression, gestural painting, and the exploration of color and form as a means of conveying emotion and ideas. It emerged in a specific historical and cultural context and left a lasting legacy in the art world. The methods, concepts, and ideologies of Abstract Expressionism in the West had an impact on a large number of artists and subsequent movements. This research aims to study the impact of Abstract Expressionism on Amjad and his ideology in comparison to Pollock.

## **Literature Review**

*Painters of Pakistan* by S. Amjad Ali (2000) covers a number of artists working in various cities of Pakistan. The artists mentioned in this book work in diverse mediums of paintings, in numerous genres including figurative paintings, still life paintings, calligraphic paintings, miniature paintings, abstract painting, and more. Despite the abundance of information provided in this book, there is a notable absence of the analysis of Asim Amjad's paintings. Thus, a significant gap is identified in literature.

The book *Jackson Pollock* by Carolyn Lanchner (2009) presents the study on the works of Pollock which are in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The book offers an intensive study, which also offers the works of other artists in comparison, like

Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró. The reference of other artists provides a comprehension of Pollock's works. However, for the understanding of the works of Pakistani artists, a close observation of Western prototypes is crucial. Hence, Amjad's work is analyzed in the light of Pollock's works.

Salwat Ali's book *Making Waves: Contemporary Art in Pakistan* (2011) consists of her articles written in magazines. In each article she discusses various forms of contemporary art from representational to non-representational and abstract art. But none of the articles is written to document the works of Asim Amjad.

Salima Hashmi's edited books *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan* (2009) and *The Eye Still Seeks: Pakistani Contemporary Art* (2015) present in detail the Pakistani art of the twenty-first century, but both the books miss out Asim Amjad's contribution to the field.

The gap in the literature is due to overlooking the works of Amjad and his input to the contemporary art of Pakistan. His artworks are not about political or social issues, but his works speak about human psychology, an aspect that helps an individual to live a social life. Documentation of his works is crucial for the understanding of human feelings and expression. For this understanding, Amjad's works are studied in comparison with those of Jackson Pollock. The knowledge of Western artist's work is pivotal in clarifying the art of Amjad.

## **Materials and Methods / Methodology**

American Psychological Association (APA) format has been used for the research. The primary source consulted for this research includes interviews with Asim Amjad. While books, articles, and web sources are the secondary sources from which the data was gathered. Abstract Expressionism places a strong emphasis on spontaneity, letting the artist's subconscious direct the artistic vision. Dynamic, sweeping brushstrokes in gestural painting reflect the artist's energy and passion.

The formal, critical, and comparative analysis of the paintings is done according to the qualitative method. Abstract Expressionism is a source of inspiration for many modern artists in Pakistan. They have introduced new concepts, materials, and technology while reinterpreting its fundamental ideas.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Jackson Pollock**

The gestural abstraction employed by Pollock in his action paintings consists of drips, and splashes of paint on large surfaces, in addition to bold brush strokes. A variety of tools are used by him for application of paint, like sticks, containers, and brushes. By involving his body gestures in the process of painting, he expresses his inner turbulence. His style became an inspiration to establish the New York School of Painters (Kleiner, 2016, p. 954-955).

*The Flame* (c. 1934-38) is an abstract expressionist painting by Pollock (fig. 1). It suggests more than any other early Pollock work, as its illustrious descendants declare that the fundamental qualities of art are derived from energy patterns rather than depiction. With the benefit of hindsight, *Flame* created a few years after Pollock left Benton's direct instruction, can be seen as a far-off precursor to the revolutionary canvases that would eventually be created. Pollock seems to have been enlightened for this primary experimentation in free erection by using the painting's curved forces and contrasts of light and dark to assist an abstract subject whose spirit is dancing movement, even though these elements still induce Benton's chiaroscuro technique and Albert Pinkham Ryder's temperamental, 19<sup>th</sup> century symbolizer effects (The Museum of Modern Art, para. 1).

Even though wriggling flames appear too thick and muscular, they come together to create a composition that is centrifugal and conflates figure and ground. However, Pollock's painting has an unpolished intensity, as if every brushstroke were infused with his nervousness, parallel to Cezanne's early, ungainly handling of the medium. *Flame* already proves painter Peter Busa's later statement that Pollock could deliver "painting an organism of existing" (The Museum of Modern Art, para.1). *The Flame* suggests more than any other early Pollock work, as its illustrious descendants declare that the fundamental qualities of art are derived from energy patterns rather than depiction.



Figure 1. Jackson Pollock, *The Flame*, c. 1934-38, oil on canvas mounted on fiberboard, 51.1 x 76.2 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, Manhattan, United States. (Source: Jackson-Pollock, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79680>).

Jackson Pollock painting *Untitled*, c. 1938-1941, screen-print with gouache additions, shows the battle scene with the viciousness, violence, and killing in which armies battle in the background and figures fall in the foreground (fig. 2). This imagery is drawn from the World War II dreadful event with a dramatic and intense composition reflecting the violence of this historical phase. Red, Black, and Yellow are in contrast with bold and energetic brushstrokes.



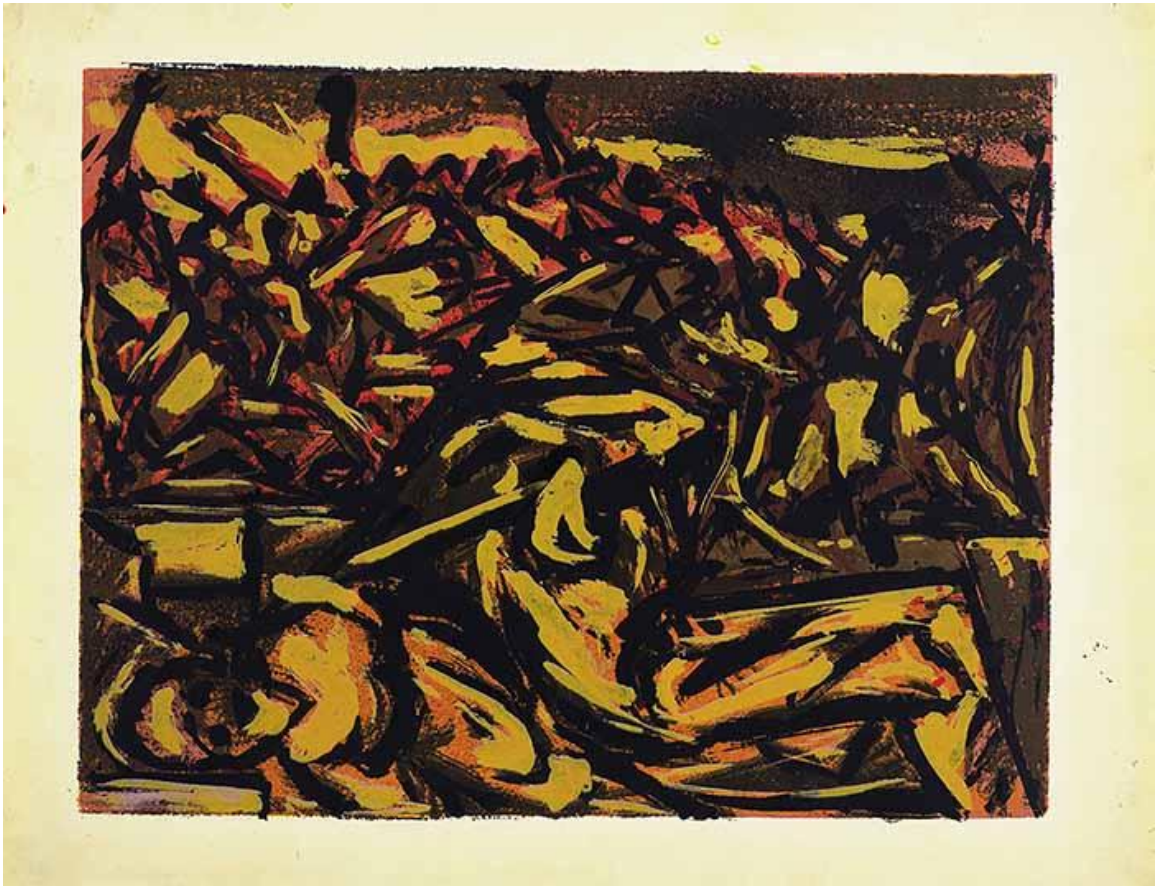


Figure 2. Jackson Pollock, *Untitled*, c. 1938-1941, screen-print with gouache additions, 52.3 x 66 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, Manhattan, United States.  
(Source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/59843>).

Another painting by Jackson Pollock is *Untitled*, c. 1938-1941, oil on linen, in which he shows the archetypal imagery of the bullfight that induces the “Guernica” painted by Picasso in 1937 while showing a predominant impression on the palette of Jackson Pollock (fig. 3) (Royal Academy, para. 8).



Figure 3. Jackson Pollock, *Untitled*, c. 1938-1941, oil on linen, 56.5 × 127.6 cm, Art Institute Chicago, Chicago, United States.

(Source: Royal Academy, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/america-after-the-fall-six-views-of-america>).

Following Joseph Henderson's relocation from New York and his departure from Pollock's studio, the latter chose to present Henderson with a painting. The *Crucifixion* was the title of the painting (fig. 4). The four colors used to create the shapes in the piece are yellow, blue, green, and red. These hues line up with the four fundamental human functions that Jung postulated in his Psychological Types. They are thought, feeling, intuition, and emotion. Jung assigned a color to each of these roles (Ersilias, para. 8-13). The reason intuition is yellow is that it glows and illuminates. Sensation is green because it is associated with the ground and reality perception, whereas thinking is blue. Lastly, because it is associated with passion, fire, blood, and love, emotion is red.



Figure 4. Jackson Pollock, *Crucifixion*, c. 1939-1940, gouache on paper, 54.6 x 39.4 cm. (Source: Ersilias, <https://www.ersilias.com/crucifixiones-de-jackson-pollock/>).

Jackson Pollock painted *The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle*, oil on canvas, in around 1943 (fig. 5). The subject of Moon-Woman by Pollock has been derived from his early artworks and drawings during the period of the 1940s. In this painting, Pollock describes the introverted standing female figure just as if she has been x-rayed and her twisted black line backbone outlines show contours. Two features of the self-show contrast through the frontal and silhouette face.

A knife can be seen in front of the moon picture, and the painting's lower portion features a second, equally enigmatic, and mysterious female figure painted with a crown of feathers and an inscrutable outfit. There are numerous boats in unsteady

circumstances, and there are a lot of misty, unclear, and unidentifiable visuals that need to be painted. One thing that all of Jackson Pollock's paintings have in common is the painter's name at the bottom of the piece. *The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle*, is one of 14 paintings that were included in Pollock's 1943 unveiling solo exhibition that discloses the artist's early allure and fascination with the works and concepts (Georges Pompidou Center).

In Pollock's artwork, the moon is typically seen as a symbol for women. Pollock, according to Elizabeth L. Langhorne, even had a bad mommy complex (Georges Pompidou Center). His strained connection with his mother Stella had an impact on him as a painter and as a person. Throughout his life, Pollock encountered numerous challenges in his connections with women.



Figure 5. Jackson Pollock, *The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle*, c. 1943, oil on canvas, 104 x 109.5 cm, Georges Pompidou Center, Paris, France.  
(Source: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/jackson-pollock/the-moon-woman-cuts-the-circle-1943>).

Pollock's first commission was *Mural* painted in 1943, oil and casein on canvas (fig. 6). When Marcel Duchamp proposed painting the mural on canvas so it could be moved, Guggenheim changed his mind and decided not to request that it be painted on the wall. Guggenheim provided Pollock an oversized canvas made of Belgian linen, but otherwise gave him no guidance or instructions Pollock was only told to paint anything he pleased. To install the enormous canvas, a wall had to be taken down.

The *Mural* is a primarily abstract piece that features sweeping swirls of black and white that appear to be several walking human beings, birds, or letters and numbers. In or around 2012, scientists from the University of Iowa and the Getty Museum examined the painting (The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, para, 1-4). Cerulean blue, cadmium yellow, vermilion, and umber were among the colors used by Pollock. Phthalocyanine green and blue were also lightly combined with oil and a home paint containing casein.

The *Mural* was supposed to be finished in time for a scheduled exhibition of his works to begin in November 1943, but Lee Krasner claimed he was "blocked" and kept staring at a blank canvas. Eventually, he started working frantically, finishing the entire project in a single day, it was traditionally believed, about January 1st, 1944. It seems that the painting was completed over a longer period rather than in a single day. The piece represents a significant turning point in Pollock's creative development from his

early surrealist abstraction pieces to his action painting. Since 1951, the University of Iowa Museum of Art has held it (Louvre Abu Dhabi, para. 1).



Figure 6. Jackson Pollock, *Mural*, c. 1943, Oil and casein on canvas, 243 × 604 cm, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York City, United States.

(Source: Jackson-Pollock, <https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/away-from-the-easel-jackson-pollocks-mural>).

## Asim Amjad

Asim Amjad has been trained as an artist under known painters of Pakistan. Iqbal Hussain (b. 1950) taught him figurative art and portrait painting. Ghulam Mustafa (b. 1952) gave him training of outdoor landscapes in dry pastels and oil pastels. Jalees Nagi, Head of Arts Department at Home Economics College, Lahore, helped him to compose figurative abstract works in oil painting, and with her appreciation, he started creative abstraction. From Ajaz Anwar (b. 1946) he learned Surrealistic work in oil. However, according to Amjad, an artist is always self-taught. The ideas and subject come naturally to the artist (personal communication, December 25, 2023). In the case of Amjad, his

subject is driven by his inner experiences. His trauma became his guide in his creative practice.

He depicts himself in the brush strokes form but not in a subjective way. There is restlessness in the strokes and abrupt approach of colors. Colors are applied in strong manners instead of having consciousness in the painting. He applies colors to the canvas in a freehand manner. The form itself emerges from the artwork instead of being created by the artist intentionally. These forms have been formed and come into existence themselves. The red in his paintings shows warmth. Red and Yellow are the favorite colors of the artist. He enjoys the tones of mixing of crimson red and Persian blue, with the addition of black. He loves to use yellow, Persian blue, crimson red, and ivory black. Authenticity is reflected through his work in such a manner that he cannot reproduce his own artworks.

In his artistic pursuits, Asim Amjad has received encouragement and support from his immediate family members. His mother Salim Kausir's (b. 1938) role has been crucial in nurturing his ambitions as an artist. His wife, Iram Asim (b. 1971) has a commendable contribution to his artistic journey, being a strong pillar of support. While his brother Sohail Amjad (b. 1967) helped him pursue his passion for art as a profession. The strength he gained from the support of three family members led him to success as an artist.

Amjad divides his paintings into three eras. The article presents analysis of all the three phases, as unveiled by Amjad in interview with the author. All emotions and

expressions are from the unconscious during the first phase. There is no use of brush or knives etc. in his first phase of painting. He used to paint with his fingers.

### **First Phase (1997-2004)**

Asim Amjad's *Unravished Bride of Quietness*, painted in 1997 on oil on cardboard, is a manifestation of Amjad's thoughts, purified through bold and courageous brushstrokes and an impartial and objective lens (fig. 7). The lashes and strokes carry an edginess, restlessness, and a hasty utilization of ensigns and colors, deviating from a cautious, deliberate cognizant, conscious and approach. The submission of colors on the canvas is executed and implemented with an unconventional, open-minded freehand technique, where the form emerges organically from the artwork rather than being meticulously, methodically, and carefully constructed. The figure of the bride and other girls around her shows the bright side of the women. The depiction of the bride and surrounding figures exudes a cheerful, bright, and positive aspect of femininity.

The imaginative and creative progression, procedure, and movement encompass the impulsive creation of forms, with the title dispensed post-creation. The prime of colors, particularly red and yellow, imitates the artist's penchants, and the relationship of crimson red, Persian blue, and black adds warmth, wisdom, and deepness to the composition. As a lover of yellow, Persian blue, crimson red, and ivory black, Amjad celebrates the unification, consolidation, and amalgamation of these tones. The legitimacy of his work mendacities in its inimitability, exceptionality, and uniqueness as he cannot replicate his artworks.



Amjad's abstract expressionist style is manifested in the unconscious expression of sentiments, passions, and emotions during the preliminary phase. In this phase, instead of brushes or knives, the artist uses his fingers to create a tactile construction with the canvas and painting. The artwork captures the spontaneity and authenticity of Abstract Expressionism, where the act of painting becomes a visceral and unrepeatable exploration of emotions (personal communication, December 25, 2023).

The phrase *Unravished Bride of Quietness* is a line from the poem *Ode to a Nightingale* by the celebrated romantic English poet of the second generation, John Keats (1819):

“Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time.”

In the framework of Abstract Expressionism painting, this phrase is referenced or used representationally and metaphorically to conjure a sense of untouched beauty, tranquility, purity, and transparency. These expressions are categorized by the artist's unprompted and emotional expression through non-representational forms. Amjad has discovered the usage of color, shape, and texture to convey his inner reactions, emotions, and passion.

By means of a line from Keats's poem, the artist portrays a connection between the emotional depth and motionlessness conveyed in the poem and the capacities he sees or goals to express in a precise abstract expressionist painting. The idea is to seize a sense

of primeval beauty or an untouched, tranquil quality in the artwork, much like the “unravished bride of quietness.”



Figure 7. Asim Amjad, *Unravished Bride of Quietness*, 1997, oil on cardboard, 35.56 x 44.45 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

In 2002, Asim Amjad painted *Sensations*, an oil on board painting that digs into the artist's penitence over not entirely embracing life with true energy and freedom (fig. 8). The painter's exclusive elements faced rejection, prejudiced by a noteworthy individual incident. The artwork intensely represents a sense of confinement and restriction, as if the artist perceives himself trapped in a metaphorical cage. The punitive lines within the painting serve as visual representations of the difficult and constrained

nature of his existence, symbolizing the limitations he experiences in expressing his emotions. *Sensations* show the essence of Abstract Expressionism by passing on the artist's inner chaos and emotional struggle through the self-motivated relationship of form, color, and texture.

*Sensations* reflect the artist's philosophical repentance for not living life fully. Hindered by the rejection of his idiosyncratic elements following a personal incident, the artwork conveys a powerful sense of confinement. Hard lines depict the restraints and emotional limitations, symbolizing the artist's fight and struggle within a metaphorical cage. In the monarchy of Abstract Expressionism, *Sensations* summarizes Amjad's emotional turmoil through self-motivated interplays of form and color, presenting a poignant commentary on the boundaries hindering genuine self-expression.

In the abstract figurative forms of Amjad's painting *Sensations*, the use of black, yellow, light blue, and brown subsidizes to the representation of thoughtful ambiances in a nuanced way. Black frequently carries a sense of deepness, mystery, and even melancholy. In this painting, the use of black signifies the darker and more multifaceted emotions that the artist is grappling with, shimmering the regrets, contests, and challenges in his life. In the context of *Sensations*, yellow symbolizes the artist's wish for a more vivacious and fulfilled life. It represents the true energy and freedom that he regrets not fully embracing. Blue is often associated with tranquility and calmness. In the painting, the use of blue suggests a desire for peace or a sense of longing for a more tranquil and relieved existence, contrasting with the turmoil depicted in other elements. Brown evokes a grounded and earthy feeling. In *Sensations*, brown represents the

concrete features of the artist's life or the roots that anchor him. It also signifies the weight of the past and the consequences and significance of the occasion that led to the rejection of his typical elements.

The combination of these colors in abstract forms conveys a visual that communicates the complexity of the artist's feelings. The interaction of colors reflects the emotional wisdom and conflict within the artist, with each color contributing to the overall chronicle of the painting.



Figure 8. Asim Amjad, *Sensations*, 2002, oil on cardboard, 35.56 x 41.91 cm.  
(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

Amjad's *Crucifixion*, painted in 2004, an oil on mirror, epitomizes exceptional venture into Abstract Expressionism, categorized by an unconventional medium and a spontaneous, unconscious painting method (fig. 9). The artist employs his fingers, rejoicing in the freedom afforded by the layered cardboard surface, consenting for subtle and uninhibited movements. This experimentation on a mirror canvas adds an additional dimension, empowering him to prompt himself more generously and relish the tactile practice of painting.

The placement of figures in a pyramidal conformation adds a sense of steadiness and balance to the painting. This classic composition gives a harmonious structure to visual chronicles. The painting's balanced contrast and pyramidal composition also reflect an implicit adherence to the golden ratio, a mathematical concept that often marks in aesthetically and artistically pleasing proportions (personal communication, December 25, 2023). The balance between the lower dark portion and the upper light part of the painting contributes to a visually pleasing composition. This balance guides the viewer's gaze and enhances the overall impact of the artwork. The use of finger painting in an unconscious manner reflects the spontaneity and raw emotion, the characteristic of Abstract Expressionism. This tactile approach allows for a direct and immediate connection between the artist and the canvas, capturing the essence of the moment.

The artist employs a vivid color palette to convey emotions and expressions with intensity. The bold and loud colors serve as a powerful means of communicating the poignant message of the crucifixion scene. Each color carries symbolic significance. For

instance, red signifies passion or sacrifice, while the interplay of light and dark tones represents the emotional complexity of the crucifixion narrative.

In essence, *Crucifixion* is a powerful exploration of Abstract Expressionism, employing unconventional techniques and a distinguishing color palette to carry a profound message. The composition's balance, achieved through pyramidal erection and communicative colors, engages spectators and calls for contemplation of the emotional depth within the crucifixion melody.



Figure 9. Asim Amjad, *Crucifixion*, 2004, oil on mirror, 39.37 x 49.53 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

In 2004, Amjad painted *Dispositions-1*, an oil on cardboard that displays the unruly and irregular movements of evidences (fig. 10). At the heart of the composition, a figure in the midpoint in red and black fascinates in prayer amongst the chaotic environment, conveying a theme of repentance within the hustle and bustle of life. This recommends a craving for redemption or spiritual relief in the face of social chaos.

Amjad expertly interconnects the idea that regret and agitation should not overshadow one's key purpose. As a genuine creation of society, the painting symbolizes moral values, purity, and a drop of humor. Among the surrounding ethical disharmony, the central figure presents a resolute stance, revealing a conscious refusal of unethical values. The dispersed situation of other figures in an unconscious way shows the societal disarray and disorder he observes (personal communication, December 25, 2023).

The artist connects a message of moral values, transparency, and a sagacity of humor. The conscious refusal of unethical values by the central figure diverges with the unconscious situation of others, representing a societal departure from the desired path. The artist expresses regret and impatience about not being in his equitable place, suggesting a broader observation of societal disarray and an unconventionality from the pathway it should ideally tread.

Through intensely pragmatic yellow, black, and red hues, Amjad injects vitality into the painting. These colors not only contribute to the visual force but also symbolize several emotions—passion, thirst, darkness, and the firmness of transformation. Overall, "*Dispositions-1*" becomes an emotional explanation of societal deviations, prompting

reflection on one's place within the communal integrity and the longing for a more ethically ranged societal path.

*Dispositions-1* is a visually outstanding piece that uses color, composition, and symbolism to convey a powerful message about societal ethics, personal contemplation, and the pursuit for meaning in the heart of chaos. The painting invites viewers to reflect on their parts within society and the collective responsibility to direct it toward a more virtuous path.



Figure 10. Asim Amjad, *Dispositions-1*, 2004, oil on cardboard, 35.56 x 41.91 cm.  
(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).



First phase of his paintings is concluded with the “Unconsciousness leading towards the identity,” as Amjad mentions in the interview.

### **Second Phase (2004-2010)**

Amjad becomes more focused and conscious in the second phase to discover women, how she behaves and how she acts and react, and to study her sacrifice and warriors as compared to men, while studying women in philosophy, colors, emotions, literature, and poetry to broader the spectrum of painting and thoughts. He is inspired from Urdu writer Manto and poet Munir Niazi to understand the actual facts. Both known for their insightful portrayals of human experiences, particularly aids in understanding the nuanced authenticities. These literary figures, known for their unwavering portrayals of societal realities, impact Amjad's perspective on the multifaceted nature of women's lives. According to Amjad, creativity arises due to the spark between men and women. This spark of emotions leads to creativity in positive or negative forms. He studies the dilemma of a woman as she has many expressions and many forms in her figurative philosophy. He uses fingers, knives, and brushes on hard board instead of using the conventional material, in the second phase. This selection of resources, methods and techniques pays to the raw and tangible fauna of his artistic expression.

In this phase of Asim Amjad's Abstract Expressionism paintings, categorized by "Conscious efforts towards the identity," the artist digs into a focused exploration of women, seeking to comprehend their performance, actions, reactions, and the details of their sacrifice and strength in contrast to men (personal communication,

December 25, 2023). This phase is manifested by a sensitive consciousness and a deliberate effort to study women, in numerous disciplines such as philosophy, colors, emotions, literature, and poetry.

Amjad engages with the philosophical features of women, aiming to hold the deeper meanings and expressions related to femininity. The study of colors imitates an effort to capture the emotional band of women, translating their experiences onto the canvas through a rich and diverse palette. By studying sentiments, literature, and poetry, Amjad extends the spectrum of his paintings and thoughts, drawing motivation from various sources to create a more inclusive and nuanced representation of women.

Amjad trusts that creativity arises from the emotional sparks between the two genders. This spark, whether positive or negative, serves as a catalyst for artistic emotions and expression. The artist sees the dilemma of women's beginning, recognizing the complexity of their existence. By inspecting several expressions and forms within women's figurative philosophy, Amjad pursues to show the depth and diversity of their experiences.

In this phase, Amjad deliberately guides his efforts towards unraveling the identity of women, discovering their complexities and contributions crossways different monarchies. The conscious study and amalgamation of numerous disciplines and inspirations contribute to a more well-versed and multifaceted representation of women in his art. The focus on identity, uniqueness, and

individuality recommends a thoughtful effort to move beyond stereotypes and uncover the authentic, diverse narratives of women.

In 2004, Amjad painted *Empty Heart*, an oil-on-board painting in 2006 that shows women behind the lines and restrictions (fig. 11). There is self-reflection in yellow brush stroke behind her which shows the shadow of her past. The painting shows more expressions apart from those of female figures. Rich colors with doubtful waiting hours with empty hearts show that if one experiences lust, he will be empty from inside while enjoying certain moments. So, the heart gets empty after losing all the emotions and true sense of spirit. This painting focuses on Abstract Expressionism, colors, compositions, rules, and underlying thoughts.

The painting brings into line with Abstract Expressionism through the usage of gestural brushstrokes, consenting the artist to show emotions and inner experiences more instinctively and intuitively. The figurative expressions and the yellow brushstroke represent self-reflection, and typify the importance of self-expression essential in abstract expressionist works. The use of rich colors proposes an emotional depth within the painting, contributing to the passion of the depicted chronicle.

The yellow brush stroke, suggesting self-reflection, adds a layer of intricacy. Yellow is associated with both hope and caution, creating an intriguing duality that speaks to the shadows of the past. Engaging the woman at the center of the composition leads attention to her experience. This symbolizes the significance of her narrative in the broader context of the painting. The addition of metaphorical

expressions yonder the woman's figure extends the opportunity of the alignment, representing the complicated description of her sentiments.

The portrayal of a woman behind limitations and restrictions advocates social borders or her struggles. This indicates the confines imposed on women and their internal scraps and combats. The yellow brushstroke shows her past as a sign of inner reflection. Her historical shadow, understanding, and experiences are intensely present and conducive to the melody of meditation. The title *Empty Heart* proposes a deep and philosophical emotional void. The artist comments on the void that results from fleeting or superficial experiences. The title *Empty Heart* proposes a deep and philosophical emotional void. The artist comments on the void that results from fleeting or superficial experiences.

The composition, rich colors, and figurative expressions diverge from conventional rules, reinforcing the artist's departure from traditional norms and his pursuit of a more emotionally charged and unconventional narrative. The use of oil on board and the gestural application of paint focus on self-expression bring into line with the freedom of expression. *Empty Heart* summarizes the spirit of Abstract Expressionism through its gestural brushstrokes, rich colors, and the importance of self-expression. The composition and use of symbolic elements, such as the yellow brushstroke and the woman behind the lines, contribute to a thought-provoking survey of emotions, self-reflection, and the values, implications, and significances of certain experiences. The painting calls viewers to involve with its complexities and interpret the description through their own perspectives.



Figure 11. Asim Amjad, *Empty Heart*, 2006, oil on board, 45.72 x 60.96 cm.  
(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

Amjad's painting *Doubtful Waiting Hours*, painted in 2006, portrays Abstract Expressionism, colors, contrast, values, alignments, compositions, rules, philosophies, and fundamental thoughts (fig. 12). The application of vibrant brushstrokes aligns with the philosophies of Abstract Expressionism, highlighting the spontaneous and emotional application of paint to take the spirit of the painting.

This painting suggests a subjective expression of feelings, passion, and experiences, a symbol of Abstract Expressionist works. The vivacious brush strokes contribute to the lively energy of the painting, depicting the strength of emotions connected with waiting and uncertainty. The allusion to the wait being “locked

behind blocks or lines,” suggests a thoughtful confirmation to carry a sense of confinement. This indicates the inhibition of emotions during epochs of ambiguity and uncertainty. The cautious and thoughtful use of blocks or lines to signify the wait holds symbolic status and significance, potentially suggesting blockades or challenges connected with the waiting period. The reference to other paintings in the series, such as *Empty Heart*, *Cage*, and *Mellow Fruitfulness*, denotes installations at a thematic steadiness, a cohesive study, and exploration of emotions across these works.

The vital theme of the uncertainty of life in *Doubtful Waiting Hours* indicates a reflection of the unpredictable nature of reality. The painting is an exploration of the emotions related to waiting for unknown conclusions. Unfolding the waiting hours as “harsh and full of pain and flood of tears” indicates a narrative that is emotionally charged and reflects the harsh realities of anticipating the unknown (personal communication, December 25, 2023).

*Doubtful Waiting Hours* encapsulates the principal essence of Abstract Expressionism through its vibrant brushstrokes, exceptional color palette, and thematic study of uncertainty. The composition, use of symbolism, and emotional depth contribute to a poignant portrayal of the emotional turmoil associated with waiting for the unknown. Spectators are invited to understand the painting's narrative through their own perspectives, engaging with the densities carried by the artist.



Figure 12. Asim Amjad, *Doubtful Waiting Hours*, 2006, oil on board, 45.72 x 60.96 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

*Cage*, painted in 2006, focuses on the artist's philosophy, composition, color contrast, and the powerful emotions conveyed (fig. 13). The dominant theme of the painting spins around the injustice confronted by women, symbolized by their confinement behind bars. This theme comprehends the boundaries imposed on women's thoughts, freedom, arrogance, emotions, passions, and expressions. The foremost focus on women behind bars forms a powerful visual metaphor for confinement and restraint. The composition serves as a touching annotation on societal limits and the struggle for freedom.

The figure in the forefront, shown in a stiff manner, reflects the restlessness and the wish to break free from the confining lines. This suggests a desire for liberation and an escape from the metaphorical cage. The use of red color symbolizes irritation, passion, and a loud voice. The bright red strokes convey a vibrant, dynamic, and influential statement, symbolizing the strength and elasticity of the women. It also indicates a strong longing for freedom. The combination of black and red in the context has a solid connotation with twilight, night, softness, strength, and passion. The dark background signifies the unfair forces or societal norms that contribute to the confinement of women.

The remark about the women's positive arrogance, pride, emotions, and bold spirit being behind bars enhances a layer of emotional deepness. This juxtaposition of positivity against detention highlights the resilience and strength of the trapped spirit. The restless posture of the foreground figure infers an inside struggle and a desire for emancipation. The rigid position proposes a determination to break free and embark on a journey of emotional freedom. The use of oil on board permits for daring, bold, and expressive brushstrokes. The bold strokes in red contribute to the strength and firmness of the message, enhancing the emotional impact of the painting.

*Cage* is a powerful and emotionally thrilling painting that conveys the theme of injustice and confinement confronted by women. The selection of colors, composition, and juxtaposition of positive motions and gestures in contradiction of the backdrop of limit creates a poignant narrative. The painting summons spectators to anticipate the societal walls that confine women and the robust spirit that struggles for fairness, justice, liberation, and equality.





Figure 13. Asim Amjad, *Cage*, 2006, oil on board, 45.72 x 60.96 cm.  
(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

While exploring the understanding of Amjad's painting *Mellow Fruitfulness*, painted in 2008, the artist's dilemma of life is observed, both in theme and composition (fig. 14). The title *Mellow Fruitfulness* hints at a nuanced study of life's prosperity, richness, success, and complexity. The painting captures the uncertainties and consequences associated with human connections, particularly the meeting of two individuals. The use of foreground and background suggests a progressive contrast. The forefront, where two male and female figures join, signifies the present

or a flash of interaction, while the background offers a glimpse into the past, providing context to the recent meeting.

The foreground's representation of figures carries symbolic weight, representing the complexities, reactions, emotions, and potential values of human interactions. The use of oil on cardboard as a medium contributes to a textured and layered effect, enhancing the emotional deepness of the painting. The choice of materials influences the overall aesthetic and tactile experience for the observer.



Figure 14. Asim Amjad, *Mellow Fruitfulness*, 2008, oil on cardboard, 30.48 x 45.72 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

Amjad concludes his second phase of paintings with the following phrase.

“Conscious efforts towards the identity.”

**Third Phase (2010 to date)**

The artist mentions that in the third phase of his practice, the painting started to happen itself without his conscious awareness or planning. The colors take forms and shapes unconsciously. These colors appear to talk and dance on their own on the surface of the canvas. This process is like an automatic process in which abstract expression emerges itself naturally. This expression is a source of energy for him to create more works, revealing his inner feelings.

During this phase, Amjad learned music and poetry to boost his consciousness. He started visiting exhibitions and participating in exhibitions. These are the conscious efforts that have a significant role in enhancing and refining his creative skills and expression. These conscious acts helped him achieve proficiency in working unconsciously. This phase has developed his unconscious expression which he loves. However, during this phase, he says that he has lost the innocence that he used to have in the first phase. The experience of trauma has made him more realistic and has created for him a realization of this world. He regrets losing his innocence and wants it back, which is not possible. "There is no greater power than innocence," said Amjad.

The painting *Blame* painted in 2011 is an oil on board work (fig. 15). This painting is the depiction of blame that the society has been giving him for being inactive in life. The artist intends to show how hard his experience was with relatives and other individuals of the society. The laziness and childhood trauma became a matter to be blamed. This painting depicts the hurt that blame has caused him. The color palette is gloomy and depressive, suggesting the artist's emotions in response to the blame. But white, yellow, and orange colors add the element of hope in the somber hues, giving rise to complexity of emotions. The expression of internal struggles and external judgment emphasizes the effect of personal

history on the artist's shortcomings. Through the colors, he dares to face the blame with an optimistic approach, determined to show his resilience and growth out of trauma.

This painting is the representation of expectations from the society and family, as well as the struggles on a personal level. The interpretation of elements with respect to Abstract Expressionism shows resemblance to the works of Pollock.

The abstract figures portray the relatives of the artist and the society. The impression of figures in impasto strokes, with no clear definition of form, is interpreted as challenges of interpersonal relationships. Abstraction refers to the multi-layered feelings that result from trauma. The painting invites the viewer to engage in the complexity of colors and strokes to experience the artist's emotions, from trauma to hope.



Figure 15. Asim Amjad, *Blame*, 2011, oil on board, 40.64 x 60.96 cm.  
(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

The painting *Psychosexual Trauma*, painted in 2015, is the depiction of various stages of his trauma (fig. 16). The term psychosexual refers to the association between the mind and sexuality. This trauma is about the experience of one's sexual development, and it has a great effect on an individual's psychological health. It influences the behavior and attitude of a person, affecting his relationships.



Figure 16. Asim Amjad, *Psychosexual Trauma*, 2015, oil on cardboard, 40.64 x 81.28 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

This painting shows figures rendered in impasto strokes in warm hues like red, orange, yellow, and black. The painting is quite similar to Pollock's painting *The Flame*. Amjad paints the impressions of figures. The warmth of these figures suggests the intensity of the traumatic emotions. The warm colors contrasting with black emanate a sense of trauma and negative emotions.

The experience of psychosexual trauma is a critical situation that requires mental health support from a professional. Treatment with a relevant therapy helps the person cope with the effects of their experience.

The artwork *Awakening* of 2020 is an oil on cardboard painting (fig. 17). It is a diagonal composition where against a gray and white stroked background, colorful female figures are painted in yellow and red. These figures create a dynamic perspective emanating energy and warmth. The balanced interplay between positive and negative spaces creates a sense of tension and creatively engages the audience. The white of the background depicts the emptiness and thirst that the artist was feeling within. This refers to the artist's yearning for something that he lacks. However, the complementing figures perfectly present the hope for good. The complex juxtaposition of emotions and experiences creates a sense of tension. Yet there is the awakening of thoughts that are freely expressed to represent hope for love.

Further intensity is created by the contrast between red and black. The passion and mystery, depicted at the same time is symbolic of life's challenges and hints of optimism. The painting invites multiple perceptions of the audience to contribute for an aesthetic experience. The aspects of anticipation and hope contribute an emotional depth to the painting.

Title of the painting embodies the realization and subsequent consciousness of positivity. In the context of awakening, there is a suggestion of potential freedom and its expression. This

freedom of expression aligns with the Western freedom of abstraction. Amjad and Pollock both seek to convey their inner side.



Figure 17. Asim Amjad, *Awakening*, 2020, oil on cardboard, 40.64 x 99.06 cm. (Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

In the case of *Mirrors of My Age*, painted by Amjad in 2023, a mixed media on canvas, the title advocates an echo of the artist's individual experiences and the social framework of his time (fig. 18). The usage of mirrors is understood metaphorically, reflecting diverse features of the artist's life and the world around him. The presence of both women and a male figure in abstract form represents various facets of human experience, relationships, or societal dynamics. The abstract nature allows for multiple interpretations, allowing viewers to associate their perspectives and emotions with the artwork. He uses acrylics and oil paints, palette knives,

fingers, and brushwork. He loves this painting from his soul. The women and male figures in the abstract are showing mirrors of his age.

The use of exciting and vibrant colors such as red and yellow shows a sense of liveliness, energy, desire, emotions, passion, and even concentration. These colors induce emotions and contribute to the inclusive mood of the piece. The exquisiteness of these colors signifies the positive facets of the artist's age or the era in which the artwork was created.

The mixture of acrylics and oil paints, along with the use of palette knives, fingers, and brushes, suggests an energetic, self-motivated, active, and multi-layered method to the creation of the artwork. This multiplicity in techniques added deepness and density to the visual experience, enhancing the inclusive expressive quality of the piece. In this abstract expression, the spectator is encouraged to be involved with the artwork on a more emotional, individual, and subjective level, finding personal meaning within the abstraction. *Mirrors of My Age* is a visual diary or a poetic representation of Amjad's reflections on his own life and the world around him.



Figure 18. Asim Amjad, *Mirrors of My Age*, 2023, mixed Media on canvas, 76.2 x 106.68 cm.



(Source: Courtesy of the Artist).

The third phase of his paintings is concluded with the realization of “*Identity*” as mentioned by Amjad.

## **Conclusion**

The works of Pollock and Amjad reveal a great impact on the unconscious mind. Their expressive paintings have an evocative quality, which stimulates the viewer to indulge in the visual. Pollock, however, is world-recognized, with his paintings exhibited in prestigious museums and with a number of books and articles that study his works in depth. He has earned a great admiration among those who have seen his work with naked eyes, as well as among those who have not witnessed the artworks firsthand but through books and online sources. These secondary sources have proved to be instrumental in promoting Pollock’s works.

Whereas, Amjad, despite his intensive practice is not as much recognized as captivating his works are. The reason behind this is the absence of analytical writings available on his works. Although Pakistani artists have been documented by many authors, but this scholarship considerably lacks in recognizing Amjad’s paintings. This research contributes in establishing Amjad’s artworks as significant role in Pakistani art. Through a comparative analysis of his work with that of Pollock, it is intended to promote him worldwide, by making his art accessible to all.

While both Amjad and Pollock fall under the class of abstract expressionist artists, noteworthy differences and transformations exist in their beliefs, viewpoints,

flairs, methods, approaches, styles, philosophies, and thematic focuses. The conclusion has been made concerning the artist's technique, practice and style, subject matter, color palette, motivation, experiences, inspiration and influences, and their phases.

In the first phase of Amjad's work, he developed a spontaneous and unconscious approach, often using his fingers instead of brushes. His brushstrokes are agitated and restless, and colors are pragmatic and used freely, intensifying the forms that derive into existence during the painting process. On the other hand, Pollock is renowned for his “drip painting” technique, he dripped, poured, and flung paint onto canvases laid on the ground. This method creates intricate and chaotic patterns, which is a significant aspect of his art.

Amjad's work often spins around the portrayal of women and their numerous features. In diverse phases, he discovers the cheerful side of women, their loss, their sacrifice, and their strength, moving from unconscious terminologies and expressions to sensible efforts toward understanding their beauty and identity. But as compared to Amjad's work, Pollock's work is more non-representational, and he often by-passed and avoided explicit subject matter. He focuses on the action, performance, act of painting itself, the physical moves, waves, motions, gestures, and emotional expression through the movement of paint.

Amjad uses a vibrant color palette, with red and yellow being his preferred colors. The tones of crimson red, Persian blue, and black are prevalent in his works. Whereas, Pollock's color palette is mixed, where he often uses bold, distinct, and contrasting colors.

His compositions are active, lively, dynamic, and characterized by the relationship of exciting and vibrant hues.

Amjad lures motivation and inspiration from literature, philosophy, and prominent figures like Manto and Munir Niazi. His work shows echoes of a conscious effort to appreciate, understand, and depict women and their multifaceted identities.

Pollock was prejudiced by the Surrealism movement, Native American art, and Mexican muralists. His work responded to the expressive, psychological, and emotional force and intensity of the time, predominantly during the post-World War II period.

Amjad's career is manifested by diverse phases, progressing from unconscious expressions to conscious pains, energies, and efforts, and, in the third phase, a return to unconsciousness with a more distinguished, energetic, expressive, refined, and well-versed tactic to his art, leading Amjad towards the realization of his identity. While Pollock's career saw progression, research, and experimentation, his breakthrough came with the “drip painting” technique, which he continued to refine.

Each phase of Amjad's work is achieved with a thematic focus and effort, such as “Unconsciousness leading towards the identity,” “Conscious efforts towards the identity,” and ultimately gaining the “identity.” Pollock's effort is linked with the wider abstract expressionist movement, highlighting the freedom and emotional intensity of the artist's actions and gestures.

While both artists fall within the abstract expressionist institution, practice, and tradition, they show exclusive methods to the movement, in their own era and in their

own geographical region. Amjad's work, with its phases and thematic explorations, reflects a conscious and unconscious engagement with the subject matter, while Jackson Pollock's contributions are marked by the innovative and revolutionary “drip painting” technique and an emphasis on the act of creation itself.

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