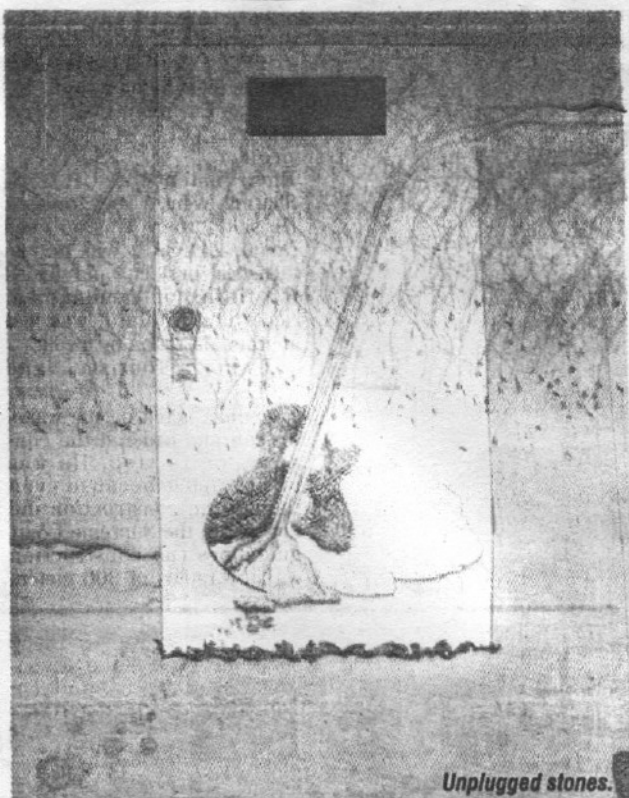
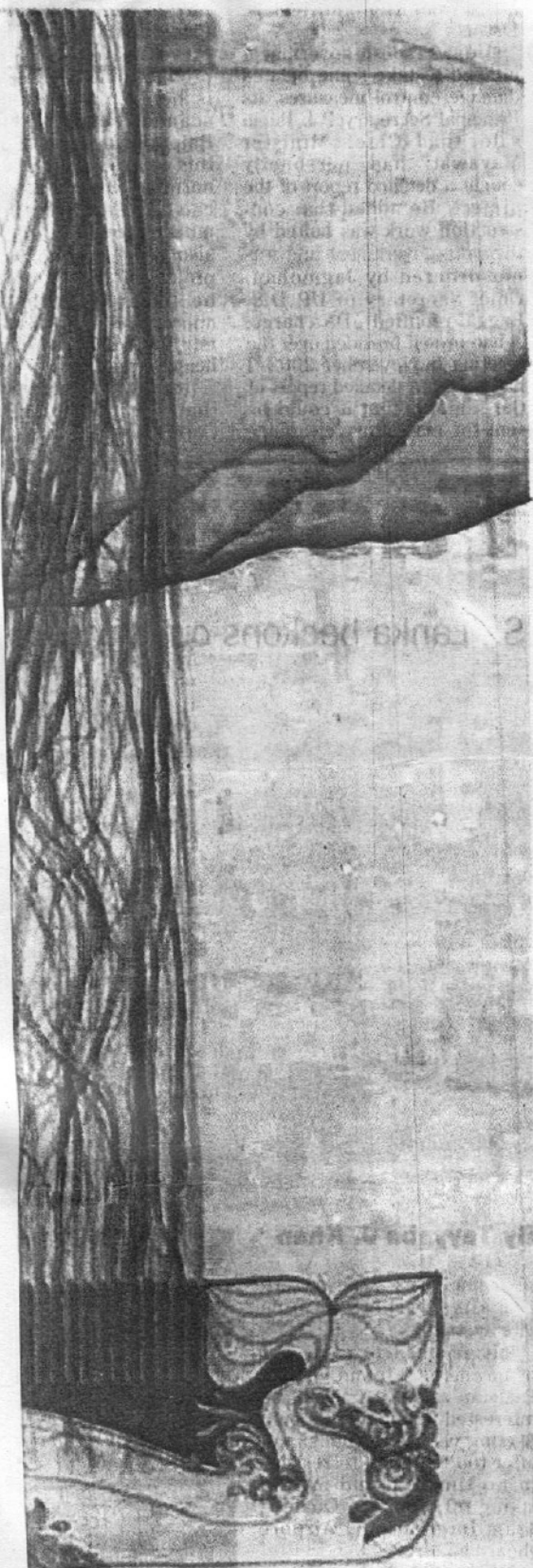


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Unplugged stones.

with dots of different colours that form the face of the artist. The manner of portraying this article with tiny dots connects it to the history of European painting, especially the movement of Pointillism, in addition to 'Pardakht', the traditional device of creating shades in the art of miniature.

The emphasis on this article and others of the same kind/function serves as a comment on the fashion industry. Through his work, as the painter claims, he desires to unravel the misconceptions surrounding the world of glamour and glitz. In fact the title of his exhibition, 'Backstage Passes' adds to the theme/concern of the artist, who focuses on the contradictions, ordinariness and somehow unpleasant side of one of the most attractive phenomena in our society today.

This aspect of fashion industry being associated with the fake reality and superficiality does not come as a surprise to anyone even remotely interested in the extravagant world of fashion. Yet Usman's decision to concentrate on this dimension has another significance. Although he is known as a miniature painter and a successful fashion photographer, the two branches of his creative personality appear to be in conflict with each other since both denote separate ideas or practices.

On a simplistic ground, miniature is a symbol of her-

itage, ethnicity and the East. Comparatively, fashion signifies all that is modern, foreign and western. Despite this, miniature is considered to be in accordance with our cultural values, whereas fashion is believed to be an excessive and somehow immoral indulgence. Yet in no way, the art of Usman Saeed can be classified as unnecessary, alien or an unethical exercise. But his recent work reveals that the criticism directed towards fashion in a way is a form of reaffirming his position as a painter, operating with a sense of identity, security and 'reality'.

With these notions implicit in his work, Usman seems to be dealing with a dilemma — of his creative self. Not long ago, he started painting on tiny photographs. This series of work exists between the fashion photographs and paintings, without indicating a link to either. Yet the tiny scale of the photographs convert these into actual miniatures, even though the image of the model or the way of applying paint do not necessarily establish this connection. However it is felt that without being too conscious of it, Usman is on the verge of evolving an art form, which encompasses his diversity of experience, concept and preference.

These and other works by Usman Saeed will be exhibited at Canvas Gallery in Karachi from July 29, 2003.