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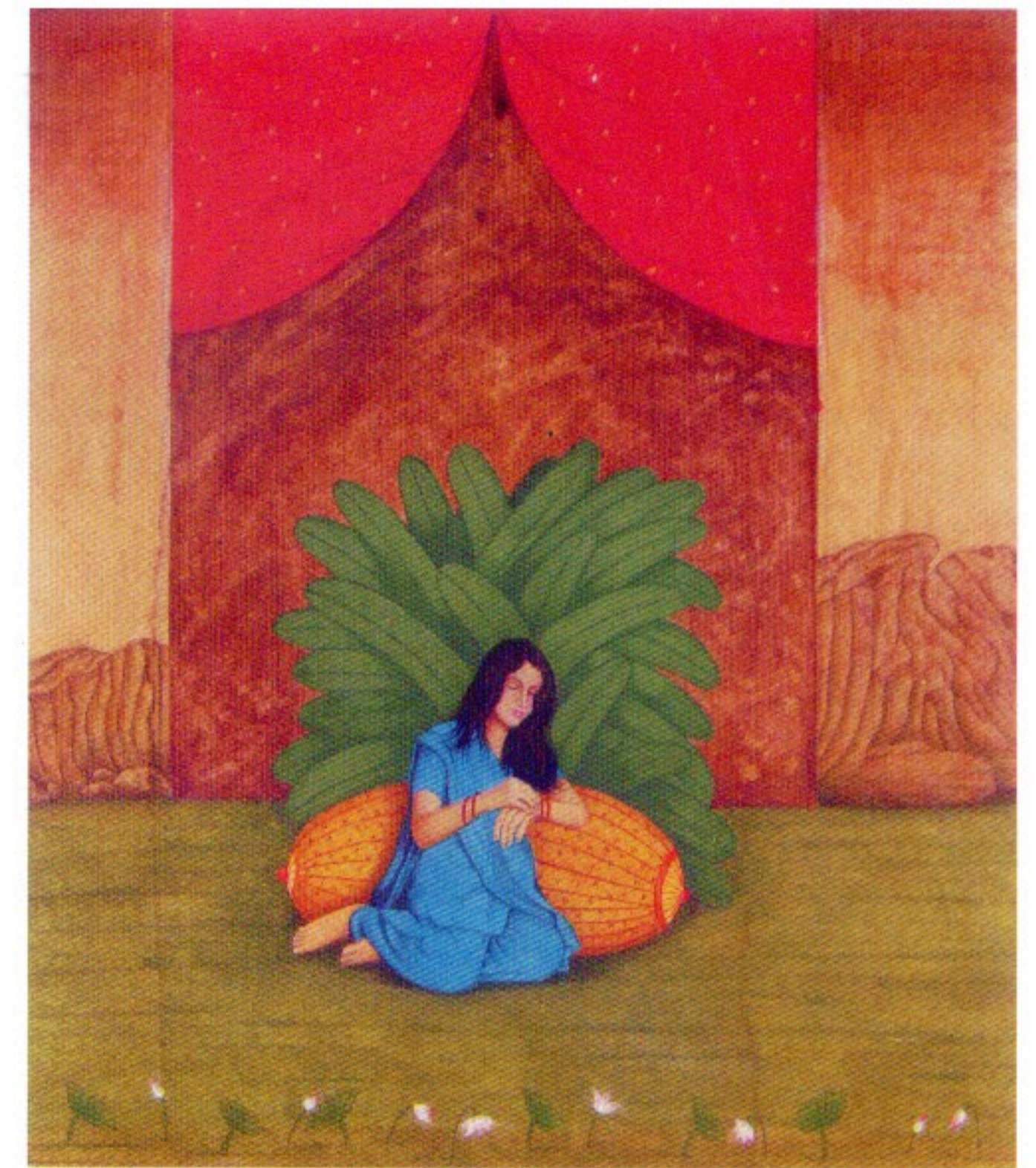
Amrita Sher-Gil:
The Passionate Quest

Eastern Beauty:
Syed A. Irfan

Alternative Art: Functional
art-craftwork by artists



Preparing for the beloved

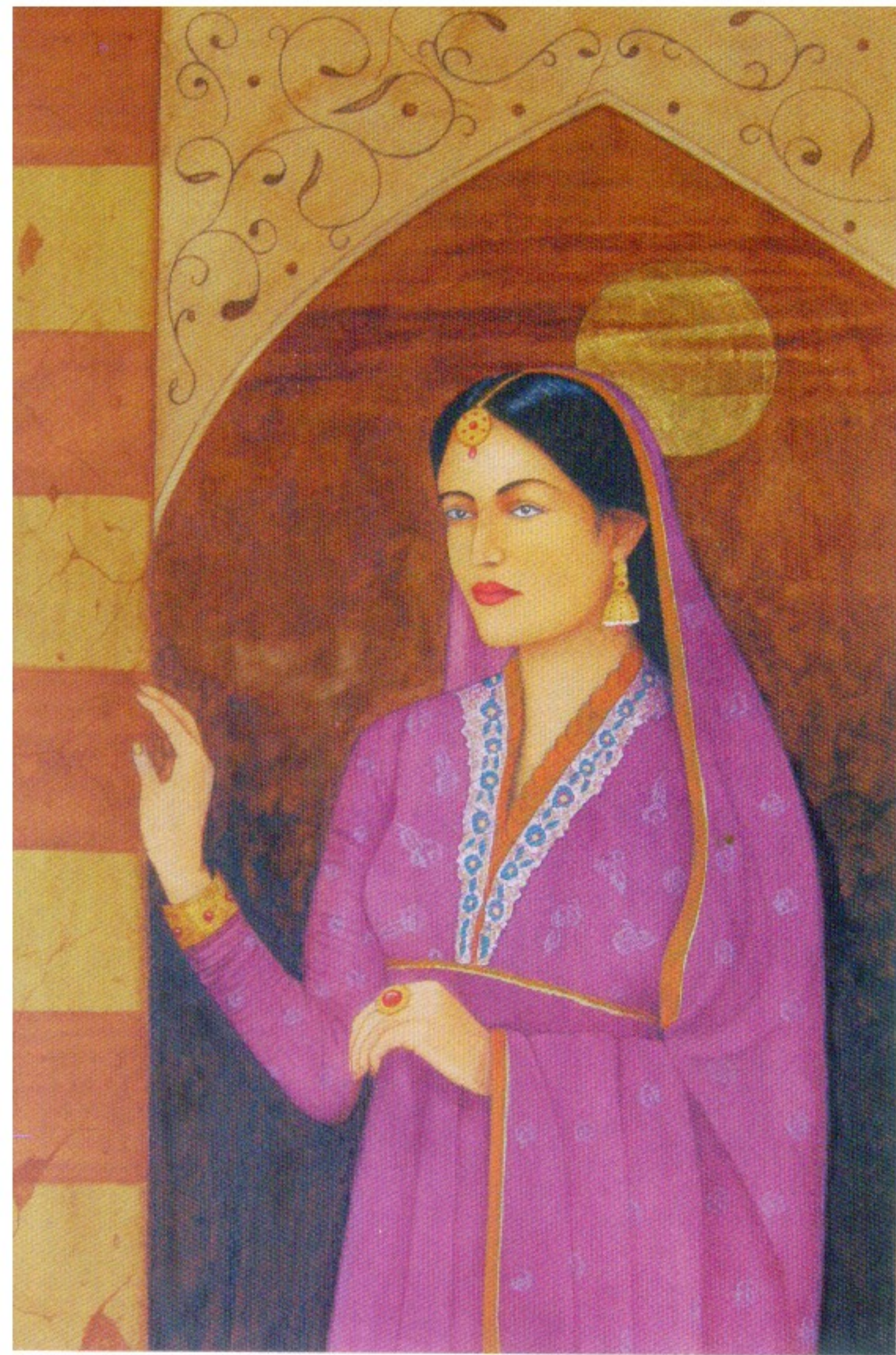


Preparing for Someone Special

Eastern Beauty

At a recent exhibition Syed A. Irfan exhibited his latest body of work at Citi Art gallery in Karachi. The artist is inspired by Mughal miniature paintings, hints of which can be seen in his style and technique. One can see the juxtaposition of women from today's middle class society against traditional backdrops inspired by the Mughal era. The attempt is to create a feeling of nostalgia for the times gone by. He successfully manages to invoke a feeling of longing and the viewer finds him/herself reminiscing about years gone by.

His colour palette is a good balance of colours, he uninhibitedly uses bright, gripping colours to paint his figures, and sober, slightly muted colours are used liberally in the back drop. The clever use of bright colours in the foreground



Waiting Someone



Woman With Pigeons

against a duller background has the desired effect of making his figures pop from the canvas.

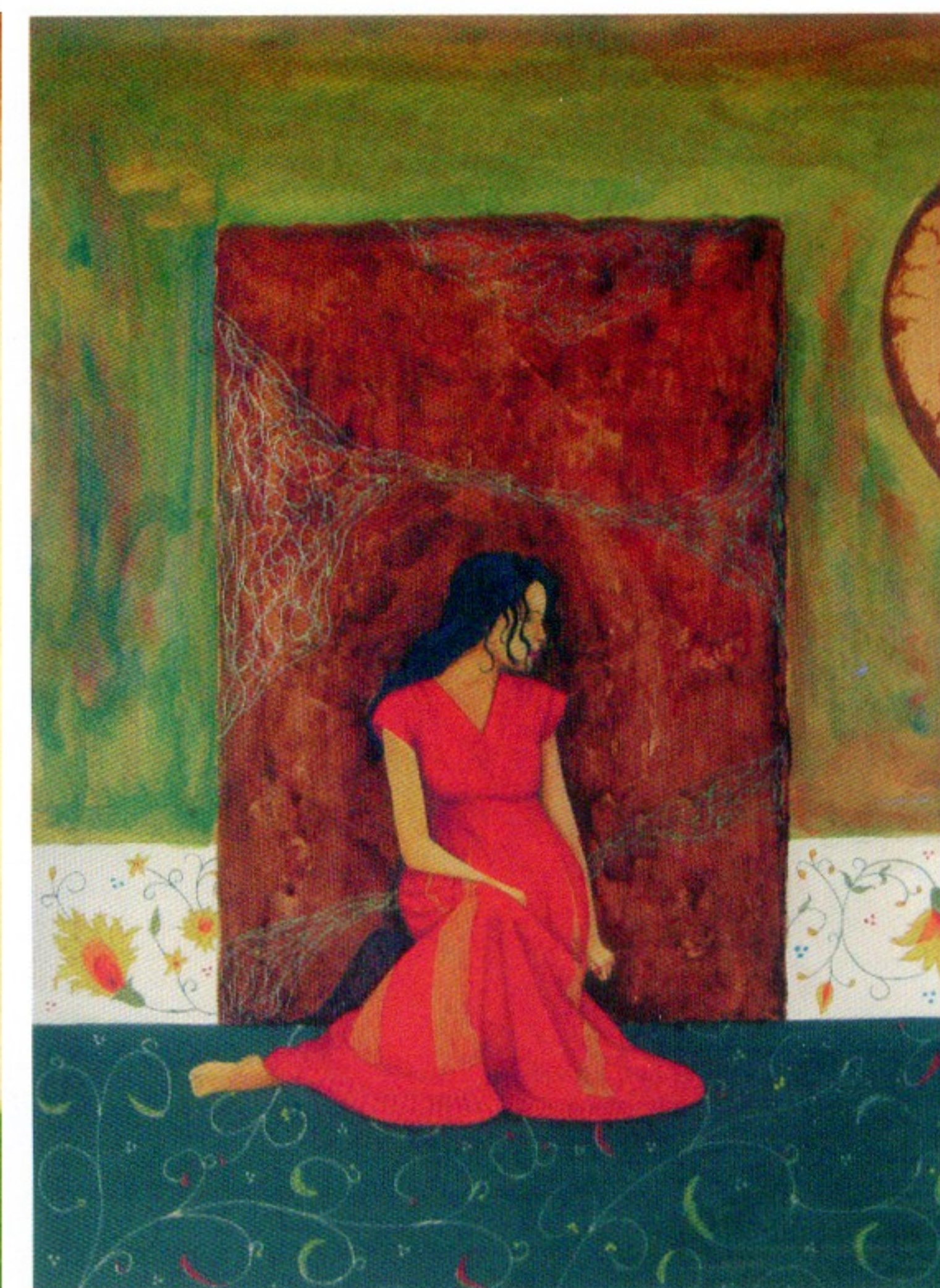
The women are adorned in traditional eastern wear and appear to be heavily ornamented. The expressions of the women Irfan paints are not clear but they give the impression of being subdued and contained. There is nothing bold or assertive about the poses and positions they take, rather contradicting the image of the modern woman who is often seen as independent and assertive. The figures are hunched, with eyes cast downwards and their hands tightly folded. These women may be seen as a tribute to women from years gone by, when women were obligated to be second to man and maintain a timid and docile demeanour that was thought to be appropriate for her.

A constant motif in Irfan's work is the presence of traditional, heavy jewellery. It is important to remember that in the East jewellery is not only closely linked to social and economic status, but is also a symbol of femininity. The pieces painted on these women are subtle and not something that one gets drawn to immediately but they are very much present throughout his series.

Also, noteworthy is the fact that white doves seem to be a constant symbol in his work. Birds which are commonly regarded as symbols of freedom because of the unique ability to fly away as and when/where they please are a constant in Irfan's work. They can be found either in the background or in some cases are seen interacting with the women as they hold them close. The fact that women are traditionally restricted and have limitations set upon them, usually by the patriarch of the family, are perhaps yearning to be more like the birds.



Woman play Veena



Release Own Thoughts



Waiting

Dusky skinned women, with dark luscious hair and voluptuous graceful bodies impose themselves on the canvas as they draw the viewer to them. Often seen as staring into space and giving the viewer the feeling that they are perhaps waiting for someone (also suggested by the titles of the paintings), causes the viewer to wonder about the lives of these women. The work that they do, the relationships they share, and the lives that they lead suddenly become something that the viewer wants to know about.

ransuccessfully manages to engage the viewer with the women that he paints. Combined with his style and ode to Mughal era seen in his technique the viewer find him/herself enjoying the work on display.



Became the Bride