

Sadequain | *A Retrospective* Including works from *The Lost Exhibition*

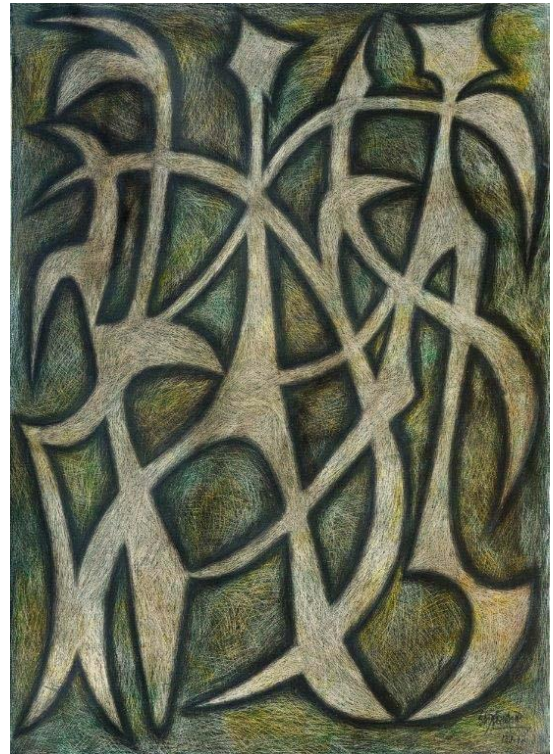
June 12th, 2014– July 12th, 2014

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, June 12th 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Aicon Gallery is proud to present the first ever retrospective exhibition held in New York of the work of Syed Sadequain, Pakistan's most renowned and celebrated modernist painter. The exhibition centers on a rarely seen group of large works painted and left behind by the artist in Paris during the late 1960s. This body of work, now known as *The Lost Exhibition*, represents the pinnacle of Sadequain's radically innovative calligraphic style of the period, while the individual works stand as some of the most formally commanding, dramatic and revolutionary paintings of the artist's long and prolific career.

In this bold exploration of forms, which the artist coined *Calligraphic Cubism*, Sadequain sought to define a set of new idioms through which he could further evolve his already distinctive visual vernacular. The term itself alludes to Kufic, the oldest-known calligraphic script in Arabic. Characterized by angular strokes punctuated by dots and accents, the Kufic script echoes throughout the background of this new style in its sharp linear definition, achieved with a palette knife by scraping the paint's surface. Meanwhile, the sweeping and intertwined gestural forms create a vibrant luminosity throughout the canvas, evoking a sort of visual dance from within the script, as if the language itself was a breathing entity. Sadequain explained the stylistic oscillation of these paintings by explaining how objects appear in various perspectives under different circumstances, such as the transition from day to night. In these works, the immaterial shades of light form the material texture and luster of the form, thereby altering the discernable levels of contrast, color, brightness and shadow. He elaborated upon this further, writing:



Sadequain, *Dancing in Paris*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 84 x 60 in.

“An object, when viewed in bright day light, will reflect a certain luster and texture. But if viewed it in the shadow of a large tree or at night under the full moon, the same object would appear of distinctly varied form and complexion.”

In these paintings, Sadequain explored these new calligraphic forms, while maintaining their scriptural origins, by portraying them in varied postures and shades. Bold spectrums of color convey the mood and time of day, manipulating the imagery via an activated texture. This body of works represents a study of mystical and surrealist forms, open-ended in their interpretations according to individual perceptions and experiences. If art imitates life, then its relationship with society defines the quintessential forms of our human existence. It was this belief through which Sadequain strove to explore and define the dichotomy between academic ideals versus implicit realities throughout his career. To him, art was innovation, and not merely a craft.



Sadequain, *Untitled (Abstract Formation 2)*, c.1960s, Oil on canvas. 45 x 35 in.

The same radical blending of tradition and innovation runs throughout the entirety of this retrospective, which also includes canvases pre-dating the Parisian period as well as a host of the artist's drawings and his rarely exhibition calligraphic works on paper. However, the Parisian works on view remain the most elusive, due to the artist's sudden departure from France in early spring of 1967, having promised to return in a few days' time. Sadequain never returned to Paris, nor did he retrieve his belongings amongst which stood these magnificent paintings. The majority of work from this era remained locked in the attics and basements of Parisian galleries and private residences, and has only begun to emerge in recent years due to the collecting and cataloging efforts of the Sadequain Foundation, with whom Aicon is jointly sponsoring the current exhibition, making this the first time these works will have been shown in New York.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (Amy@Aicongallery.com) for more information.