

PRESS RELEASE

**Let's Fly First Class!**

Recent Works by SANA ARJUMAND

Aicon Gallery, New York: 27 May – 14 June 2010

Opening Reception: Thursday May 27, 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Multi-media artist Sana Arjumand is a leading figure in the current generation of Pakistani artists. The work of this generation of contemporary artists serves as a unique window into range of culturally relevant subject matters – personal identity; gender politics; religion, spirituality and existentialism; social justice – reclaiming and redefining Pakistani cultural heritage.

In a rapidly evolving society, Arjumand's work expresses the artist's dual response towards her Pakistani identity: her pride and belief in her nationality and cultural heritage paired with a desire to embrace progression of the modern world; and her frustration with those whose actions and ideas reflect a lack of vision. She utilizes the distinct and immediately recognizable icons of Pakistan's cultural heritage - the green and white of the Pakistani flag; the star and crescent moon – while also toying with street-level cultural icons, such as bearded men in traditional garb (100,000 Years of Growing Beard, 2009), American luxury automobiles (Bureau car, 2010), and the airplane (Mairaj 1 & 2, 2010).

This metaphorical notion of airspace is a theme to which the artist returns throughout the course of her work. Mairaj 1 & 2, both digital prints on canvas, depict a wildly colored airplane immediately recognizable as a sister to the ubiquitous painted lorries and cargo trucks which monopolize the highways of South Asia. Arjumand covers her airplane – so often associated in a post-9/11 society with the shadow fear of terrorism – with the same religious and patriotic imagery which decorate South Asian cargo trucks, subverting the shadow paradigm with playful images that invoke a spiritual path – the term *mairaj* referring to the invitation from the divine to ascend the self and experience the pure essence of being. The four monotypes and paintings from the series "Let's Give Each Other Space" evokes the same theme, as these planes trace heart-shaped and rainbow-strewn pathways through the open sky.

Arjumand works in layers, literally and metaphorically, sometimes over a period of several years. Her work transcends the canvas as she transforms it through multimedia, utilizing video and large-scale installation. Her airplane series on canvas, for example, became a 20ft painted wooden airplane for installation, which in turn became the model for the digital prints on canvas, Mairaj 1 & 2. Playfulness, humor and whimsy are the common denominators to which Arjumand returns, again and again, as she reacts to the increasingly volatile environment which surrounds her. Arjumand explains: *"I express my ideas through the light of wit, which makes situations less dense. Our constant involvement in discussing and living in the state of chaos makes us forget the naturally embedded sense of humor in us. Utilizing a sense of humor in art through icons, colors and imagery, I confess, reflect or react more comfortably ..."*

Sana Arjumand was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1982. She received a BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2005. She has participated in group exhibitions worldwide, including Aicon Gallery, 2007, 2008 and 2009; Flux Festival, London, 2009; Broadway Gallery, Amman, 2007; East West Center, Honolulu, 2008; and Canvas Gallery, Karachi, 2008 and 2009; and has also taken part in notable residencies, such as Art Omi in New York. The artist currently lives and works in Islamabad, Pakistan.

*This exhibition runs from 27 May – 14 June 2010. For all media inquiries, please contact us at (212) 725 6092 or [query@aicongallery.com](mailto:query@aicongallery.com)*