TAMSAAL
ISSN Print: 3007-5939
ISSN Online: 3007-5947
Volume 4, Number 5, 2026, Pages 262 – 274
Journal Home Page
https://tamsaal.pk/index.php/tamsaal/index

Pastel as Drawing and Painting: A Comparative Analysis of Five Works by Four Pakistani Artists

Naveed Khan[1], Dr. Imrana Seemi[2]

[1]Assistant Professor School of Design, Arts and Architecture Technologies, Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology, Haripur, Pakistan.
[2]Associate Professor and Former Chairperson, Department of Art and Design, University of Peshawar, Pakistan, ORCID: 0009-0003-8567-955X

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received:	*April*	*10, 2026*
Revised:	*May*	*12, 2026*
Accepted:	*May*	*24, 2026*
Available Online:	*May*	*28, 2026*

Keywords:

pastel; drawing and painting; Pakistani artists; comparative visual analysis; mark-making; hatching; tonal modelling

Corresponding Author:
Naveed Khan
Email:
naveed.khan@fecid.paf-iast.edu.pk

DOI: *https://doi.org/10.59075/tamsaal.v4i5.273*

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the drawing and painting qualities of pastel by comparing five paintings of four Pakistani painters: Khan Abdul Ghani Khan, Prof. Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud, Tahir Siraj and Ishtiaq Hussain. It is analyzed in terms of line, tone, colour, edges and visibility of marks, based on the chosen works of art, their records, published discussion and information provided by the artists. The two portraits by Ghani Khan show two different approaches: one captures the model's essence through limited strokes, while the other uses rhythmic, the other is the rhythmic, dynamic and expressive treatment. In The Dream Garden by Masud introduces pastel into the conversation with pencil, charcoal and silk screen printing. The Sarson-I by Siraj is constructed by hatching and using the varying colours next to the other, but on the other hand, the Kaka by Hussain is created by the blending of tonal and colour transitions to form the face. Throughout these works, the drawing and painting are not distinct steps, but complementary functions. A visible line can create a distinction and add to colour and volume; a smeared passage can preserve the underlying structure of drawing. The comparison also draws the difference between the interaction of drawing and painting in pastel and the combination of multiple media. The current study provides a work-focused description of the expressive and descriptive breadth of pastel without prioritizing the artists or making the examples chosen summaries of their overall work.

© 2026 The Authors, Published by ULLR. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution (CC-BY 4.0)

Introduction

A contour can be defined by a pastel mark, can indicate a shadow or create a colour area. Whether it is drawing or painting is not determined by its dry application. A stroke, which at close quarters is linear, may form a part of a face, a field or a tonal mass when seen in the entire composition. Pastel thus provides a convenient point of departure to the study of the functioning of drawing and painting in conjunction with each other.

This paper explores that association using five works of four Pakistani artists; two portraits by Khan Abdul Ghani Khan, In the Dream Garden by Rahat Naveed Masud, Sarson-I by Tahir Siraj and Kaka by Ishtiaq Hussain. The works present contrasting approaches to the medium, from abbreviated portraiture and expressionistic gesture to mixed-media composition, hatched landscape and blended modelling. Their comparison focuses on how pastel strokes develop a visual rather than on a historical review of pastel in Pakistan.

The two portrait paintings by Ghani Khan play a key role in the selection. The former embodies the spirit of the sitter by the reserved application of stokes and the use of precise light marks. The second is more rhythmic, energetic and expressionistic due to spontaneous and bold utilization of striking colours. Their inclusion enables the study to analyze variability within the treatment of the pastel by a single artist and the differences among the four artists.

The main question is: how do the chosen works introduce the drawing and painting qualities of pastel into the correlation? The discussion considers the role of line in creating form, the role of colour and tone in structuring the image, and the role of discrete or blended marks in creating pictorial continuity. It also poses the question of how the various applications of pastel is different than its involvement in a composition created with multiple materials. It is not the intention to rank the works between drawing and painting or to evaluate one method as more successful than the other. Rather, the paper will explore the ways in which each of the works utilizes the linear, tonal and chromatic capabilities of pastel. The comparison considers the visible mark and the bigger pictorial structure as connected aspects of the same image.

Materials, Selection and Comparative Approach

The approach of the study is qualitative and comparative with five selected artworks. Its materials include the artwork images, accompanying descriptions and caption records, published discussion of the artists, as well as artwork information and artist statements collected for the research. The author's pastel experience brings an awareness of mark making, colour deviations and how individual strokes relate to a complete image.

The selection is purposive. The five works were selected for the various ways in which they engage drawing and painting: the application of strokes, the expressive rhythm, the interaction between the media, the repetition of hatching and the blending of modelling.

Each work is examined through five associated aspects: the use of line, the organization of form or space by tone, the utilization of colour, the treatment of edges and transitions, the visibility and rhythm of marks. The analysis also considers the way in which these functions are used in a composition in Masud's work, which includes pencil, charcoal, pastel and silk screen printing. This common framework enables the comparison of different subjects without the need to reduce the visual differences to a numerical measurement.

The discussion shifts from single readings to direct comparisons. Special attention is paid to the contrast between Ghani Khan's two portraits, the hatched strokes in Siraj's landscape and the tonal continuity in Hussain's portrait.

Drawing and Painting within Pastel

Here drawing and painting are seen as mutually overlapping pictorial functions. The structure of forms and their position can be determined by contour, hatching, direction of strokes and abbreviated notation. Tonal masses, colour interactions and shifts between edges can give those forms volume, atmosphere and spatial unity. These functions do not belong entirely to either drawing or painting. A line can carry colour and establish form while a broad tonal stroke can be contingent on precise structural relations.

It's not about a dry material versus a wet material, or a monochrome versus a coloured image. In the chosen works, the drawing qualities of pastel are evident in the positioning, direction and articulation of the marks. Those marks reveal the painting qualities of its relationships between areas of colour, light and shadow. There are several ways to link multiple marks and layers such as blending but strokes can also be used to create a coherent image.

There are two kinds of interaction to differentiate. The first one is within the pastel itself, where a line has been kept as a line and is used to help create tone, colour or volume. The second is between materials such as Masud's use of pastel and pencil, charcoal and silk screen printing. The use of multiple media does not automatically imply a connection between drawing and painting, rather, it is the action of the marks and colour areas within the composition that suggest the connection.

Siraj's hatching is an example of how pastel lines can be used as a colour field. The two portraits by Ghani Khan and Hussain present alternative modes of shaping portrait structure, which make it possible to compare selective accents, expressive movement and continuous modelling without any one of these being the definitive use of pastel.

Khan Abdul Ghani Khan: Master of Marks and Expressive Rhythm

The two portraits of Ghani Khan illustrate the use of pastel in different ways in the same subject. In the chosen works, that immediacy is manifested in two ways: one is a focused approach that is able to capture the essence of the sitter with limited marks while the other is a more energetic treatment where the rhythm of the marks becomes an expressive force.

Untitled Portrait: Capturing Essence through Selective Marks

Untitled Portrait (Fig 1a) is an elongated face that emerges from a dark greenish ground. The facial areas are highlighted with warm ochre, yellow and orange colors with subdued eyes. Ghani Khan does not capture all the features equally but focuses on a few strokes of light and dark colours.

The drawing qualities lie in the abbreviated strokes that indicate the features and suggest structure of the head. These marks are not forming a continuous outline around the face. Their position enables the viewer to connect the accents that are visible and identify the form in less described strokes. The sitter’s personality is depicted through the correlation between what is identified and what is left open to perceive.

The same marks also act as painterly purpose. The warm stokes contrast with the darker ground, creating a sense of illumination and adding a tonal presence to central features of the face. Likewise, short and less saturated strokes indicate the remaining features of the face. Line and colour are thus not distinct additions, but rather their functions are overlapped within the mark. The darkness of the background helps to enhance the presence of the portrait. It provides more weight to the illuminated marks and the head emerges without having a molded structure.

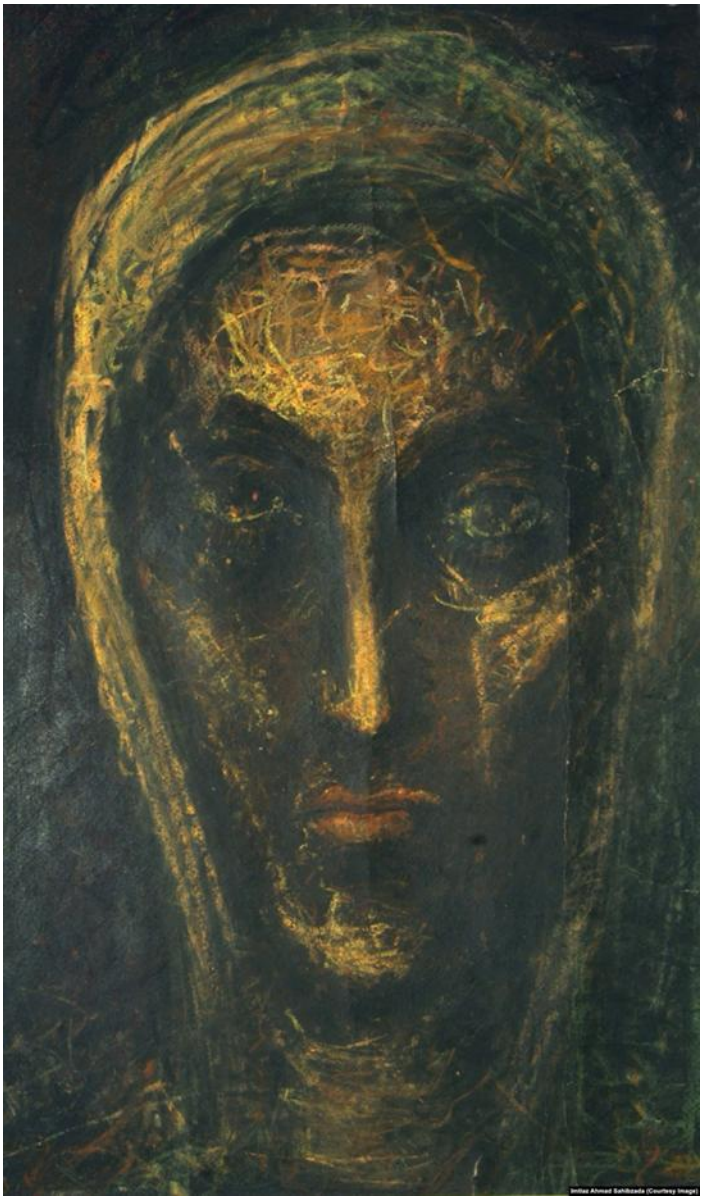


Fig 1a. Khan Abdul Ghani Khan, Untitled Portrait, presented to admirer Inayat Ilahi Malik, 1952–60. Pastel on paper, 15 × 20 in. Permanent collection, Ghani Dheri Museum. Photograph: Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada.

Self-portrait: Rhythmic, Energetic and Expressionistic Handling

The Self-portrait depicting a tortured soul with a crown of thorns (Fig 1b) uses pastel more rhythmically and energetically. Golden and cream marks enliven the visual, while darker facial marks and particular lights establish the head structure. The crown of thorns provides

an insistent linear motif around the face. Together, these elements give the image a more visibly expressionistic character than the muted handling of *Untitled Portrait.*

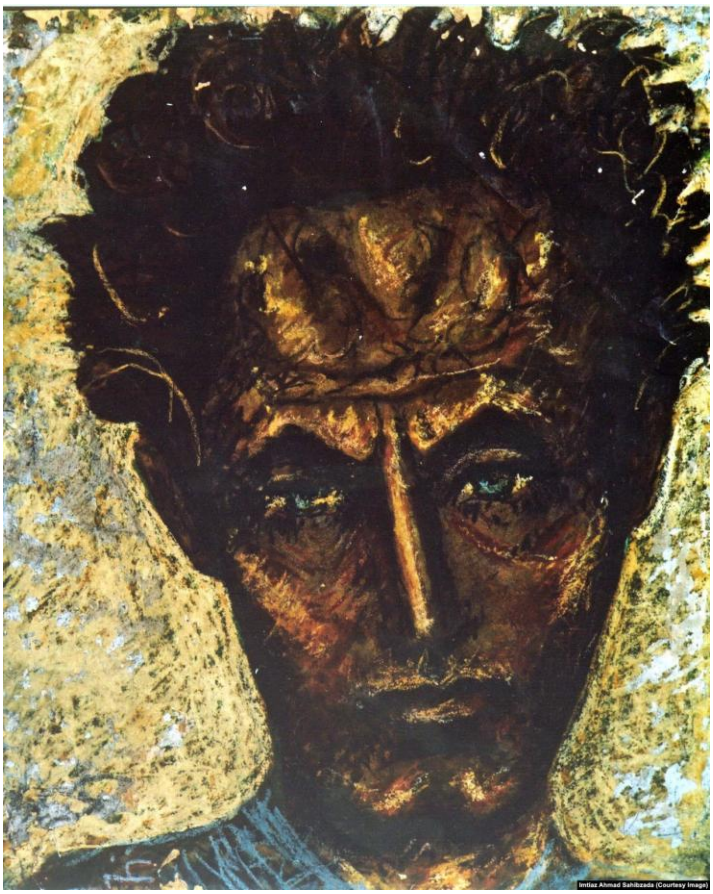


Fig 1b. Khan Abdul Ghani Khan, Self-portrait, depicting a tortured soul with a crown of thorns around his head, 1955–70. Pastel on paper, 15 × 20 in. Permanent collection, Ghani Dheri Museum. Photograph: Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada.

Here, linear marks are not only used to portray features, but also to provide a sense of movement to the image. Marks are made in the direction and repetitive manner that create an optical rhythm that carries attention between the head, the thorn motif and the surrounding elements. The linear marks are not deactivated or lost in smooth transitions.

The darker background juxtaposes with the brighter gold and cream areas, creating a sense of contrast and depth in the painting. Colour and tone structure the composition and the energetic marks give the surface a lively appearance. The overall composition portrays the emotional intensity of the of the visual. The thorn motif also contributes to the suffering that is mentioned in the title of the work.

The two portraits are different in the way they attain expression. *Untitled Portrait* is based on restraint, limited depiction and focused light. The Self-portrait is more focused on gesture, rhythm and vibrant colour. Their comparison reveals why the use of pastels by Ghani Khan cannot be narrowed down to a single approach.

Rahat Naveed Masud: Pastel in Dialogue with Other Media

In the Dream Garden (Fig 2), part of the Masud's new painting series titled "Fruit Tree Series", is a combination of pencil, charcoal, pastel and silk screen printing on watercolour paper (Art Soch Gallery, 2026). The overall composition includes, a female figure, garden imagery, linear elements and printed forms. The work continues the comparison by presenting pastel as a component of a mixed-media painting. Lines assist in the arrangement of the figures and other elements. Those elements are linked to each other by colour and tonal ranges throughout the composition.



Fig 2. Rahat Naveed Masud, The Dream Garden (Fruit Tree Series), 2025. Pencil, charcoal, pastel and silk screen printing on professional-grade watercolour paper, 28 × 23 in. Photograph courtesy of Art Soch Gallery and the artist's official social media account.

The connection between drawing and painting lies in the composition of the painting, not in a mere separation of a drawn outline and colour superimposed on it. The listed materials cannot be assigned one task only. A pencil and charcoal can create a line as well as a broad tonal area. Likewise, pastel can create sharp lines as well as softer transition of a hue. While the use of printed method introduces another kind of graphic articulation. The painting brings these potentials together, allowing differences in edge, intensity and surface to remain part of its visual composition.

Masud's work thus makes a distinction central to the current study. Its mixed-media approach concerns to the materials employed while its drawing and painting interaction is about their

pictorial roles. These two are connected but not the same. The composition is pertinent to pastel because it demonstrates the medium in collaboration with other types of mark-making, where colour and structure are created by the relationships between them.

The work of Masud, in comparison with the repetitive pastel hatching of Siraj, extents pictorial activity across several materials. Its interplay of line and colour is incorporated in a larger union of figure, garden imagery and printed form than in the portraits of Ghani Khan. The comparison broadens the description of pastels without implying that all the visual effects in the mixed-media work are created in pastel.

Tahir Siraj: Hatching as Line, Colour and Space

In *Sarson-I* (Fig 3), Siraj creates a landscape of the mustard-field by hatching and layering colours side by side in a repeated manner (Khan, 2026). The marks do not lose their direction and separation, and the linear nature of pastel is clearly visible. But they are more than just lines, cross contours and or a framework. Their deposition determines the colour, texture and spatial relationships of the landscape.

On a stroke-by-stroke basis, the work maintains a drawing vocabulary. Each hatch has an orientation and occupies a particular position in relation to its neighbours. In a wider perspective, however, the strokes merge to form areas of vegetation, illumination and distance. The same marks thus are used to describe the locality and to organise the landscape in general.

The relationships of colours are formed by adjacency and not by physical blending. Individual colors add to a common visual effect but are still differentiated on the surface. In this discussion, the pictorial effect is called optical blending, as the colours are not rubbed together to create a uniform mixture. The visible intervals and directions of the strokes are still part of the texture and rhythm of the image.



Fig 3. Tahir Siraj, Sarson I, 2015. Pastel on paper, 20 × 30 in. Photograph courtesy of Tahir Siraj.

Siraj's landscape is an example of how the qualities of pastel as a painting medium do not rely on the ability to hide the drawn marks. Hatching is not just a preparatory step under the image, but is the way of the image's formation. It is linearly organized and at the same time provides spatial coherence with colour.

This comparison with Ghani Khan helps to explain two applications of a visible stroke. *Untitled Portrait* is a series of accents that focus on certain parts of the face. In *Sarson-I* successive strokes are laid out on the surface and create larger colour fields. It is also a contrast with Hussain, who joins neighbouring strokes in more continuous modelling, that Siraj constructs transitions through separate hatches. Both methods involve drawing and painting and provide different experiences with the pastel mark.

Ishtiaq Hussain: Tonal Continuity and Modelled Form

The warm flesh tones, cooler tones in the beard, clothing and shadows and the energetic reddish background (Khan, 2026) all contribute to *Kaka*'s smile (Fig 4). Unlike the visibly distinct hatches of *Sarson-I*, the portrait emphasizes more on blended transitions and descriptive continuity. Its painting qualities are seen in the modelling of the head by variations of tone and colour temperature. Facial planes are created by light and shadows and warmer and cooler hues are created by not necessarily having a dark contour at every boundary. Blended transitions enable neighbouring marks to be less prominent as the form is given continuity.

Drawing is an integral part of this construction. The positioning of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, the direction of the eyelids and the edge of the cap structure the portrait. These relationships define the structure of the face even in a place where a distinct line is not visible. Drawing here serves by proportion, position and the expression of form and not by bare strokes alone.

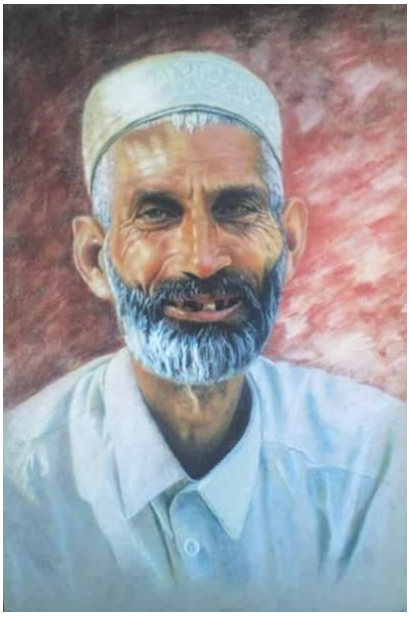


Fig 4. Ishtiaq Hussain, Kaka, 2010.
Pastel on pastel paper, 20 × 30 in.
Photograph courtesy of Ishtiaq Hussain.

The reddish background gives the head a contrasting field and helps in the organisation of colour in the portrait. It is not as continuous as the face modelling but demonstrates that a single work doesn't have to be blended in the same manner throughout. The connection between the colorful layers and a more animated surrounding area provides pastel with more than one role in the composition.

Kaka provides more related transitions in the facial form as compared to the *Untitled Portrait* by Ghani Khan. The *Untitled Portrait* expresses presence by the choice of accents and moments of less description, while *Kaka* articulates its existence by a more ample continuity of modelling. The *Self-portrait* of Ghani Khan is another point of difference with its rhythmic and expressionistic treatment. These oppositions relate to the structure of portraiture, rather than to a hierarchy of artistic finish or to a separation between legitimate drawing and legitimate painting.

Comparative Discussion

The five works show various connections between the individual mark and the entire visual. Their main focuses are limited mark-making, spontaneous application, rhythmic expression, cross-media interaction, repeated hatching and blended modelling. These distinctions provide an argument for comparing the drawing and painting qualities of pastels without degrading the works to predetermined stylistic categories.

Line as Structure and Visible Movement

Line carries out a number of tasks throughout the selection. The *Untitled Portrait* by Ghani Khan employs selective marks to find features and focus attention. The energetic rhythm of the thorn motif and the surrounding strokes makes linear movement more prominent in his *Self-portrait*. Siraj spreads the line across a field of repeated hatches and Masud makes linear elements in relation to the pastel colour and printed forms. In ways where the depiction is carried out by tonal modelling, Hussain makes individual lines less conspicuous.

These distinctions demonstrate that visible line and structural drawing cannot be considered interchangeable. Siraj's marks are still very clear in the colour field. Even in blended transitions, where the individual strokes are not easily discernible the facial structure is still organised in Hussain's work. Drawing can thus exist as an observable language of marks and as a relationship between forms.

Colour, Tone and the Construction of Form

In each work colour and tone work differently. In Ghani Khan's first portrait, warm accents against a dark ground provide a limited number of marks with a lot of descriptive power. The second one is a golden and cream color, which contrasts with darker facial sections to enhance the expressive movement of the image. Siraj establishes colour relationships by adjoining hatching and Hussain creates volume in the face by sequential value and temperature changes. Masud introduces colour to a composition where various materials are used to organise it.

The painting qualities of Pastel are created by these relationships and not by a single dictated surface treatment. The amount of blending and detail is not the only factor to consider when determining whether colour helps to sustain an image. A focused accent, a field of individual strokes and a flowing tonal line can all help to create a unified pictorial structure.

Edges, Transitions and the Visibility of Marks

The works also vary in the way they relate one stroke to another. The minimalistic portrait of Ghani Khan gives the viewer the opportunity to fill in portions of the form between the chosen marks. His expressionistic portrait places more emphasis on the gesture of marks in the picture. Siraj is articulated by repetition of hatching, whereas Hussain blurs most of the transitions in the modelled face. Masud adds variations of drawn, coloured and printed elements.

These methods are ways in which the surface is made known to the viewer. There are clear strokes that anticipate the process of marking; there are lines that are blended, and which emphasize more on continuity of form. Both are not mutually exclusive. The comparison reveals that the visibility of pastel marks can be varied to serve description, rhythm, atmosphere or expression.

Drawing–Painting Interaction and Mixed Media

The work of Masud provides a helpful point of demarcation in the argument. Its mixture of materials cannot be compared to the ability of pastel to serve as a drawing and painting medium. Ghani Khan, Siraj and Hussain prove that this interaction can take place in the medium of pastel itself. Whereas Masud demonstrates that pastel can also be involved in a broader exchange of pictorial functions between materials.

The same question unites the five works, but not by the same procedures. The comparison is based on their differences: pastel may be linear, tonally continuous, or collaborate with other media and contribute to the structure and colour of the image.

Table 1: Drawing and painting characteristics in the five selected works

Work	Drawing characteristics	Painting characteristics	Relationship between them
Ghani Khan, Untitled Portrait	Abbreviated marks and selective placement of features	Warm accents and concentrated illumination against a dark ground	Economical marks convey the sitter's essence while establishing light and form.
Ghani Khan, Self-portrait	Directional marks, repeated accents and the thorn motif	Contrasting tonal areas and animated golden and cream passages	Rhythm and colour combine in energetic, expressionistic handling.

Masud, In The Dream Garden	Linear articulation within a mixed-media composition	Colour and tonal relationships across figure and garden imagery	Pastel contributes to an interaction of drawn, coloured and printed elements.
Siraj, Sarson-I	Repeated, visibly distinct hatching	Adjacent colours establish landscape masses and space	Linear strokes remain visible while collectively constructing a colour field.
Hussain, Kaka	Structural placement of features and articulation of facial form	Blended tonal modelling and warm–cool relationships	Drawn organisation underlies the continuity of the modelled face.

Scope and Contribution

The paper provides a comparative description of the way in which five works relate the drawing and painting properties of pastel. It adds to the visible differences of handling, the pictorial functions: how an abbreviated mark expresses presence, how rhythmic strokes express, how hatching builds a colour field, and how blended transitions hold the structure of drawing.

There are various topics and an unequal number of works by each artist. Such differences are included in the scope of the study. The comparison does not claim to be a statement about individual style or to be applied to the artists' entire practices, but rather about approaches that can be found in the selected works. The mixed-media composition by Masud also needs a differentiation between the contribution of pastel and the joint effects of multiple materials.

The five-work comparison within these limits illustrates the importance of studying pastel in terms of the correlation between marks and pictorial organisation. It enables the discussion of drawing and painting as one without considering one as a preliminary or less complete form of the other.

Conclusion

The chosen works demonstrate how the qualities of pastel as a drawing and painting medium work in harmony with one another in various ways of mark-making. The *Untitled Portrait* by Ghani Khan embodies the spirit of the sitter with the help of sparse strokes and the use of limited light. His Self-portrait is more rhythmic, energetic and expressionistic, combining directional movement with tonal and colour contrasts. The contrast between the two portraits is the focus of the comparison: pastel can be restrained, and it can be expressed with a strong energy by the artist.

In The Dream Garden, Masud engages pastel in a conversation with pencil, charcoal and silk screen printing media. *Sarson-I* by Siraj preserves the linear identity of hatching but applies it to construct the colour and spatial depth of a landscape. Hussain's *Kaka* has more continuity

because of blended modelling, and drawing is maintained by the arrangement of the features and planes of the face.

In all five works a visible line can be used to create an edge, add colour and help to create volume. A blended space may seem continuous and rely on structural relationships related to drawing. The various approaches of Pastel are thus not a set of opposites between drawing and painting, but the ways artists work with the functions. The comparison is found in the application, rhythm, adjacency and continuity of the marks of the selected images.

References

1. Burns, T. (2007). *The invention of pastel painting*. Archetype Publications.
2. Burns, T. (2015). *The art of the pastel*. Abbeville Press.
3. Hashmi, S. (2001). *Unveiling the visible: Lives and works of women artists of Pakistan*. Sang-e-Meel Publications.
4. Khan, M. S. A. (2013). Ghani Khan: The poet-painter (1914–1996). *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 21*(2), 63–72.
5. Khan, N. (2026). *Pakistani pastel artists: Artwork records and artist statements supplied to the author* [Unpublished research documentation].
6. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. (n.d.). *Edgar Degas. "At the Milliner's": Technical study of a pastel*. https://www.museothyssen.org/en/conservation/edgar-degas-milliners-technical-study-pastel
7. National Gallery of Art. (2023, August 11). *Edgar Degas's experiments in pastel and watercolor*. https://www.nga.gov/stories/articles/edgar-degass-experiments-pastel-and-watercolor
8. Pilgrim, D. H. (1978). The revival of pastels in nineteenth-century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel. *The American Art Journal, 10*(2), 43–62.
9. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2004, October). *Edgar Degas (1834–1917): Painting and drawing*. https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/edgar-degas-1834-1917-painting-and-drawing
10. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2020a, May 1). *Pastel*. https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/materials-and-techniques-drawing-pastel
11. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2020b, August 27). *Precious powder: The fragility of Degas's pastels*. https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/precious-powder-degas

Author (s) Information and Declarations

Naveed Khan is a PhD scholar at the Department of Art and Design, University of Peshawar, Pakistan and assistant professor at the School of Design, Arts and Architecture Technologies, Pak-Austria Fachhochschule: Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology, Haripur, Pakistan. He is a working pastel artist and the founder and president of Pastel Society of Pakistan (PSP). He also serves as an Advisor at the Abasin Arts Council Peshawar.

Dr. Imrana Seemi holds a Ph.D. in Art and Architecture from the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. She has served as a faculty member at the College of Home Economics, University

of Peshawar, since 1991, progressing to the positions of Assistant Professor and Associate Professor. She has also served as Chairperson of the Department of Art and Design, University of Peshawar, and was appointed the first Principal of the College of Home Sciences, University of Swat, in 2012–2013. Her academic and research interests include art and design, architecture and interior design, ceramics, textile and graphic design, art education, drawing, and painting. She has contributed to curriculum development, academic administration, and various educational committees at national and institutional levels. She has also published research papers in reputed journals.

Acknowledgements: The author gratefully acknowledges the artists and collections that provided information and photographs of artwork for this study.

Funding: The author states that the article was prepared without any specific funding.

Competing interests: Naveed Khan is a practicing pastel artist, founder and president of Pastel Society of Pakistan (PSP) as well as Art Advisor at the Abasin Arts Council Peshawar and has professional relationships with the artists mentioned. He is not one of the four artists analyzed in this article.

Research materials: The article is based on published sources and images of artworks and records provided by the artists and collected for the study.