

The mesmeric  
enigma of calligraphy



Reinforcing our belief in  
the power of 'reading'

IQRA







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Mahrugh Mohiuddin



Najib Tareque  
Artist of the artworks In this publication

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Cover photo  
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Najib Tareque



acrylic on canvas, 137.5 cm X 81.5 cm, 2014



# A painter's salute to holy scriptures

*If you get one penny, buy food to meet your hunger*

*If you get another, o connoisseur, buy flower...*  
(Al Hadith)

A painting exhibition titled 'Iqra' (Read): A painter's salute to reading' is currently being held at The Standard Chartered Bank, Gulshan branch. Iqra is a solo painting exhibition

of Najib Tareque, who also doubles up as an executive of the said bank. The current exhibition presents 22 different forms of calligraphy of the word 'Iqra' that connotes 'read'.

Najib comments 'reading books have been my inspiration, specially the religious scriptures.' He further shares his orientation and interpretation of the religious scriptures that he has studied till date.

'Being a Muslim, the Quran was the first book I was introduced to. Out of the many things that my teacher taught me, he explained the meaning of the word 'Iqra'. Later, I learned Sanskrit and I found that in many Sanskrit books written on art and culture, they consider ever and desire as art.'

The exhibition started on September 16, 2011. It is erratic since they have the office timing "after I understood the Quran, it ceased to be a book portraying virtue, or a book of salat and suam."

Najib paid his tribute to the Standard Chartered





*“Read - a painter’s salute to reading”*

anything related to life.

will continue till the timings a bit arc in tandem with s. Najib continues od the meaning of sed to be merely a fear of sin, greed of k that only teaches

gratitude to The Bank for allowing

him to use the space for exhibiting his art. He wrapped up the conversation by saying that “today the name of Islam is mostly weighed down with a connotation with terrorism, whereas the truth is far from what is portrayed in media. I hope to change this perception with my work. Reading brings about a change in perception and I have tried to align books and art on the same plane. A few days back, there was a report that said in USA, the

production and selling of one product remained completely unaffected by the global financial crisis – books.”

**Where:**

Standard Chartered Bank, 67 Gulshan Avenue

**When:**

Sunday – Thursday (9:30am – 2:30 pm & 4pm – 5:30pm) until September 16

acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 41 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



# **The mesmeric enigma of calligraphy**

Takir Hossain

Najib Tareque is a promising painter who graduated from Institute of Fine Arts (now Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka) in 1987. He has worked as an artist at different Bangla newspapers. Tareque's earlier works highlighted nature, figures, portraits and sketches. His portraits and figures are semi-realistic and at times surrealistic or impressionistic.

Tareque's ongoing exhibition features calligraphy and focuses on Islamic spirituality. The exhibition, titled "Iqra—A Painter's Salute to Reading," is being held at Impressions Gallery, Standard Chartered Bank Head Office, in Gulshan, Dhaka.

Calligraphic patterns enrich Tareque's works, most of which are rectangular and oval shaped. Arabic calligraphy is the primary form of Islamic art. For centuries, Arabic calligraphy has remained a symbol of unity and beauty in an abstract form.



Most of Tareque's works feature vibrant colours, and the backgrounds are moving. The artist has focused on Arabic alphabets and words.

All of Tareque's works have been done in acrylic. Composition is one of the most important aspects, especially when using diverse forms and shapes.

Tareque's images look dynamic, enigmatic and encapsulate a vast expanse of the sacred and the meditative. His expressions are understandable and signify the Quranic explanations and their spiritual aspects.

Artworks at the exhibition demonstrate the splendour of Arabic alphabets through vivid colours and lyrical forms.

Tareque has incorporated many elements in his art, which help to denote the vastness of Islam and its uniqueness.

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Exhibition is held at Impressions Gallery by Najib Tareque. The exhibition will continue till 15th of September 2010.

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The daily Star (Sunday, August 29, 2010) & islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine, 2010

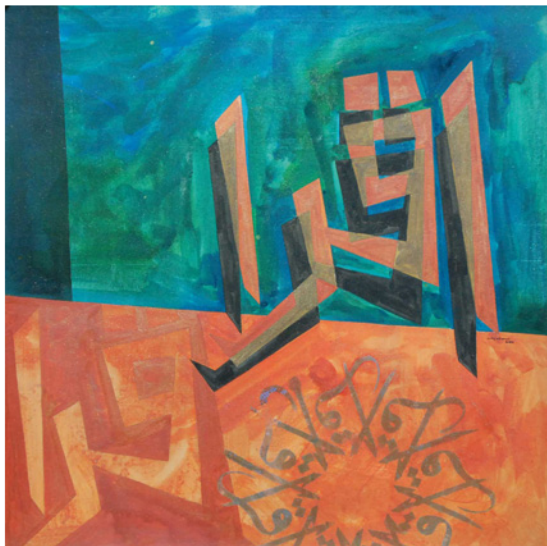
acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



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acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010





acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 41 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



# **Reinforcing our belief in the power of 'reading'**

Mahrugh Mohiuddin

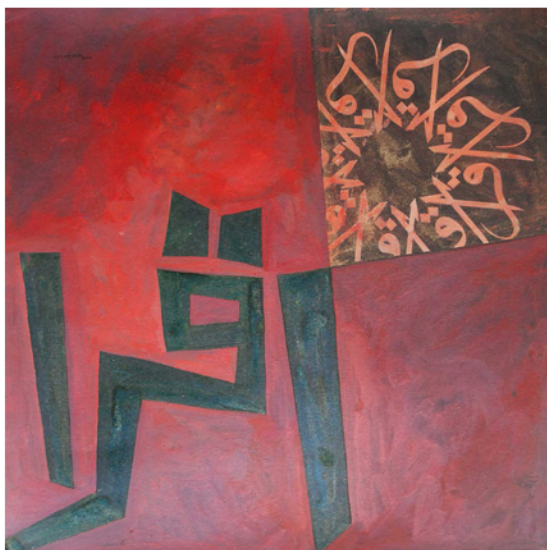
The exhibition of the IQRA series by Najib Tareque could not have been taking place at a time more appropriate than at the juncture where our country is today - when truth is silenced in every possible manner, and the only way to survive with sanity is by "reading". And I mean "reading", not in the way it is ordinarily understood, but in the multiplicity of its meaning. According to Dictionary.com, to read means:

- to look at carefully so as to understand the meaning of (something written, printed, etc.)
- to utter aloud or render in speech (something written, printed, etc.)
- to have such knowledge of (a language) as to be able to understand things written in it
- to apprehend the meaning of (signs,

acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



characters, etc.) otherwise than with the eyes, as by means of the fingers

- to apprehend or interpret the meaning of (gestures, movements, signals, or the like)

In the time we live, we are compelled to "read" more than just the printed words presented to us in the newspapers, hear more than just the spoken words in the television news and talk-shows. We have to apprehend and interpret the meanings of signs, gestures, and indications that are beyond the surface meanings of what we are exposed to in the form of sanctified expressions.

Whether we believe in the words of the Quran or not, there is no denying of the power and influence of this book on mankind. When the revelation of the Quran began with the word Iqra, it tells us that the act of "reciting" or "reading" has grave significance in guiding mankind towards understanding the beauty, harmony and singleness of the universe that ultimately leads to the betterment of their lives - personal and collective.

When I first laid my eyes one of the unique pieces of the IQRA series hidden away at a

gallery some five years back, I uttered the word instantly, although I hadn't read Arabic in decades, and felt the joy of decoding the meaning of what I saw. In the variations that Najib Tareque brings through his renditions of IQRA - he sometimes hides the word deliberately in swirls of colors - almost provoking the viewer to decode more than just the word - perhaps to provoke a certain consciousness. That's what artists become memorable for - because these sensibilities and realizations transcend time, class, age, and geographic boundaries. Najib Tareque, through his homage to Iqra, is reminding a generation to recite, read, and read deeper. There is so much for us to decode everyday in everything we see around us, and start waking up to truth and enlightenment.

*Mahrukh Mohiuddin works at The University Press Limited (UPL)*

acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010





acrylic on canvas, 76 cm X 101.5 cm, 2014



acrylic on paper, 41 cm X 37.5 cm, 2014



acrylic on paper, 25 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



acrylic on paper, 37.5 cm X 37.5 cm, 2010



acrylic on canvas, 137.5 cm X 81.5 cm, 2014







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আমি পৃথিবী শাসনের ভার 'আশরাফুল মখলুকাত'কে দিয়ে  
রেখেছি।

আল কোরান

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বাংলাদেশে সকল মুসলিম পরিবারের রীতি বা প্রথামত  
আমাকেও শৈশবে কুরআন শিক্ষা করতে হয়েছে, আমাদের  
ভাই-বোনদের যিনি কুরআন শিক্ষা দিতেন- তিনি আমাদের  
শিখিয়ে ছিলেন 'ইকরা' শব্দের অর্থ ও গুরুত্ব। এরপর  
কুরআন আমার কাছে পাপের ভীতি, পুণ্যের লোভ বর্ণনা  
কিংবা নামাজ-রোজা শিক্ষার গ্রন্থ থাকেনি। হয়ে উঠেছে  
অন্য এক মহান গ্রন্থ। সেই অধ্যয়নের পথে হেটে  
আমি-'জ্ঞান আর্জনের জন্য চীনদেশে (নাস্তিকতা, কম্যুনিস্ট  
আন্দোলন) যেতেও' ভীত হইনি।

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ইতিহাস ও পরিসংখ্যান সাক্ষী- যে জাতির পঠন অভ্যাস  
যত বেশী সে জাতি তত উন্নত।

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ক'দিন (২০০৯/১০) আগে একটি জাতীয় দৈনিকে  
প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল একটি রিপোর্ট-এই অর্থনৈতিক  
বিপর্যয়েও মার্কিন দেশে যে পণ্যটির উৎপাদন ও বিপণন  
একটুও কমেনি, সে পণ্যটির নাম 'বই'।

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[issuu.com/najib.tareque](http://issuu.com/najib.tareque)