Iqbal Geoffrey v. The Museum of Modern Art

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'Pakistanis are nobody's fools', artist and lawyer Iqbal Geoffrey wrote in a 1968 letter to staff at the John D. Rockefeller III Fund in New York, an Asian cultural exchange organization founded in 1963.[1] They had known for years that organizations like 'Friends of the Middle East, etc. were CIA undercover organizations', Geoffrey declared.[2] The 'agonizing outcome' of all this foreign meddling in Pakistan's political and cultural life, he went on, was anti-democracy and anti-US feeling. The only people who love the incumbent Pakistani dictator, General Ayub Khan, 'are Swiss bankers'.[3]

Curiously though, a year before the American Friends of the Middle East (AFME) was revealed by *Ramparts* magazine and the *New York Times* to be indeed a 'pass through' for CIA funding, Geoffrey had held a solo exhibition at the institution's headquarters in Washington, DC. The show was titled *Islamic Art and Abstract Painting – a Synthesis by J. Iqbal Geoffrey* in reference to the artist's ornamental and calligraphic abstractions (*plate 1*). When he accepted the invitation to show his paintings there, had Geoffrey suspected the organization's less-than innocent connections? Almost certainly. Yet as a minority South Asian artist in an art world that had little place for him, the invitation to exhibit in so prominent a forum was not to be passed up. In Geoffrey's particular case, as this article will demonstrate, it also meant a chance to regard power up close and, if possible, to make mischief with it. What follows is an analysis of Geoffrey's fraught relationship with institutions of US Cold War diplomacy during the 1960s and early 1970s. My focus is the artist's long-running feud with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. In 1971 Geoffrey sued the museum for human rights discrimination on account of his paintings having been snubbed by its curators and for their failure to treat him as an American artist of note. As Geoffrey stated in his case, 'if a Dutch or a German is an *American* artist the moment he lands, so is the complainant'.[4]

Born Syed Jawaid Iqbal Jaffery in 1939 in the Punjab town of Chiniot, Geoffrey first trained as an accountant and lawyer in Lahore before moving to London in 1959 to become an artist.[5] From London, he made his way to the US in 1962, where he practised both art and law until his final departure for Lahore in 1985. In 1966, he completed a Master of Laws degree (LLM) at Harvard University and later worked as a Human Rights Officer at the United Nations (1966–67), an Assistant Attorney General of Illinois (1972–73), and an independent lawyer and painting professor at institutions including Central Washington University and Cleveland State University. At the UN, Geoffrey caused a minor diplomatic incident by joining under the US rather than the Pakistani staff quota and produced his first 'monumental liquid sculpture' by urinating from one of the high floors of the General Secretariat Building.[6]

Detail from Iqbal Geoffrey, *In Search of an Ideal Landscape*, c. 1965 (*plate 10*).

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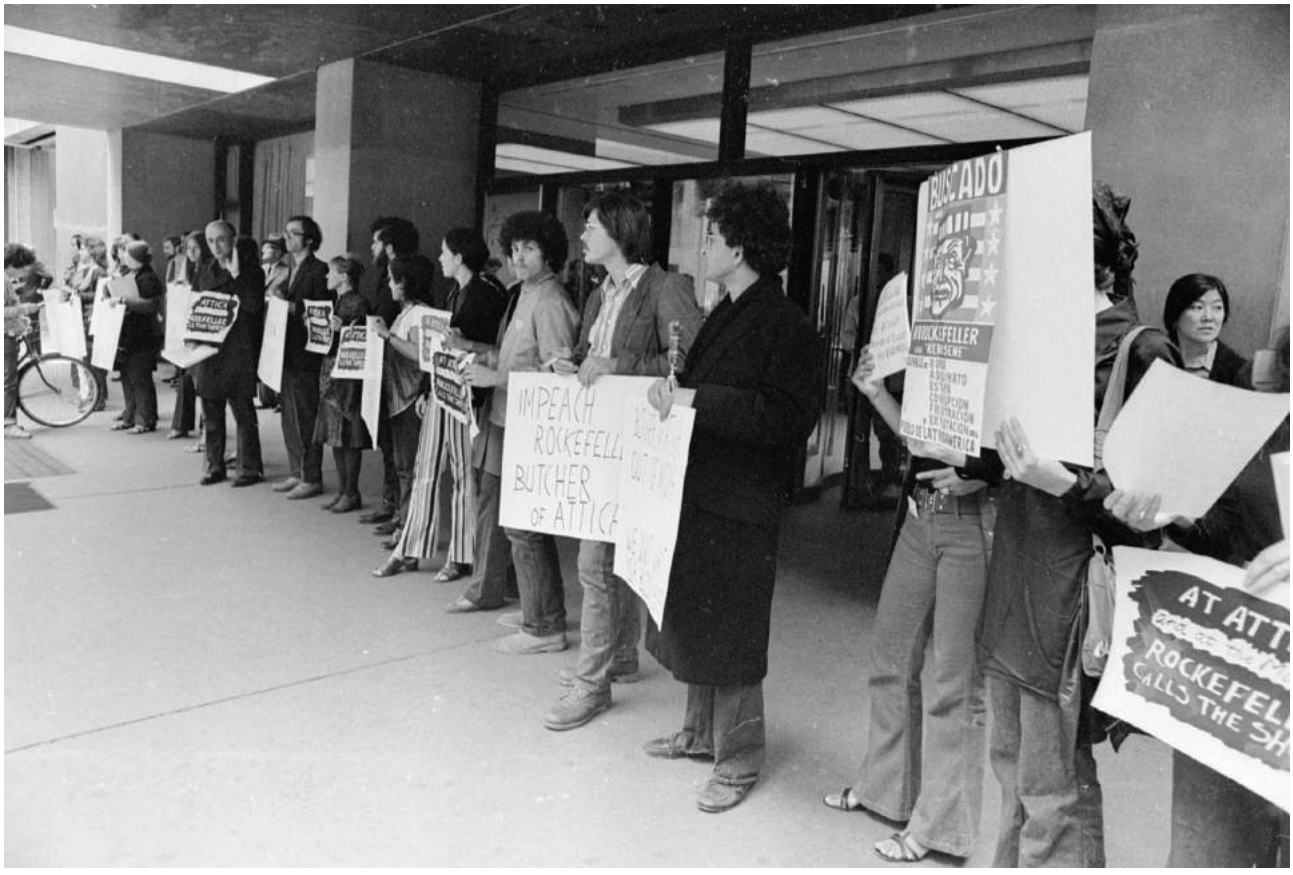
1 Flier for *Islamic Art and Abstract Painting – a Synthesis by J. Iqbal Geoffrey*, exhibition at the American Friends of the Middle East offices, Washington, DC, 1967. Asia Society Records, County Councils, FA110, Series 2, Box 126, Folder 1303, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

Geoffrey's relationship with the JDRIII Fund (now the Asian Cultural Council) began when the Fund provided him with two fellowships to support his painting, in 1964 and again in 1965. The letter that opened this article was part of a request for more support ($1,000 to paint and study for an art history PhD), and for an opportunity to air his complaints that the Fund was giving too much support to Indian artists, when it should have been supporting more Pakistani artists like him. It was vastly unfair, he argued, given that Pakistan was a Cold War ally with the US and India was then being 'buddy-buddy' with China. 'America must learn […] to distinguish between friends and enemies', he chided.[7] Geoffrey's letter is double-edged. While agents of cultural diplomacy like the AFME, the JDRIII Fund and the Asia Society (also founded by John D. Rockefeller III) provided the promise of much-needed support, Geoffrey was deeply suspicious of their self-appointed role as arbiters of the circulation and representation of modern Asian art in the US.[8] Moreover, he argued that their diplomatic purview positioned Asian artists like himself within an inherently transactional and temporary relationship to the US art world, and that this undermined his permanent status in the country along with his hopes for assimilation and art-historical posterity. Significantly, Geoffrey's contentious letter above was posted from London, where he had travelled to extend his United States work visa. The extension had been denied. This prevented

him from returning home not only to his wife and all his paintings and possessions but also to a teaching role at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana.[9] When Geoffrey eventually came back to the United States in late 1970, after nearly two years away, he turned to legal litigation as an instrument of protest. Among his targets was MoMA, against which he filed a suit in early 1971.

Geoffrey's case coincides with an unprecedented wave of activism against MoMa and other New York cultural institutions led by collectives including the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG), the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), and the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC). Action included performances, picket lines and strikes to challenge the museum's Eurocentric canon, sexism, and especially its neglect of artists of colour.[10] Presaging the recent resurgence of protest directed at MoMA, activists during the 1960s also targeted the museum's sponsorship and entanglements with controversial donors and politicians that tied the museum by association with human rights atrocities both local and international (*plate* 2).[11]

Geoffrey's 1971 intervention overlaps but also contrasts with the activist efforts taking place in parallel. As a newly arrived South Asian artist in the United States, his career fell between the bifurcated communities that MoMA served during the mid-century: one, the largely white community of Euro-American artists under interrogation by the AWC and GAAG, and the other, the international clients of MoMA's Cold War diplomacy abroad. Beginning in 1952, MoMA's International Program and its council of advisees and supporters drew on the museum's propaganda programming during the Second World War to take responsibility for the promotion of Western art abroad, in lieu of the government's McCarthyist suspicion of avant-garde culture.[12] Between the 1950s and 1970s and at the height of the Cold War,



2 Artists and the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) protesting outside MoMA against the Attica prison massacre, asking for the impeachment of Governor Nelson Rockefeller and his resignation as head of the MoMA board of trustees, 23 September 1971. Photo: © Jan van Raay.

MoMA's International Program organized dozens of exhibitions at home and abroad in collaboration with agencies including the United States Information Service (USIS), the US State Department, and UNESCO. Numerous scholars have shown how abstract expressionist painting was especially helpful in promoting the values of freedom, democracy and heroic individualism during the Cold War decades, and in opposition to Soviet realist painting and related forms of political collectivization.[13]

As legal historian Mary Dudziak has written, the need to present the US as a global protector of freedom and liberal values during the Cold War also gave political momentum to national conversations, especially related to civil rights and immigration.[14] At the same time, the Cold War also framed and limited their success, 'to the extent that the nation's commitment to social justice was motivated by a need to respond to foreign critics, civil rights reforms that made the nation look good might be sufficient'.[15] Geoffrey's legal case against MoMA exposes a similar problematic at the museum. Against the transactional, diplomatic reception of South Asian modernist art in the United States during the Cold War, Geoffrey leveraged the legislative shifts of the Civil Rights era to make a case for his belonging within the US art world and the modernist canon that has only recently begun to account for the presence of artists like him within a global, let alone national, story.

In Search of an Ideal Landscape

Geoffrey's feud with MoMA began in 1963, when then-director of acquisitions Alfred H. Barr Jr. neglected to visit Geoffrey's solo exhibition *In and Out of Calligraphy* at Grand Central Moderns Gallery in New York. Barr had been advised to make the trip by his MoMA colleague, Dorothy Miller, who had first encountered Geoffrey in her parallel role as art adviser to New York Governor and contemporary art collector, Nelson Rockefeller. In early 1963, on his way from a Huntington Hartford residency in California to New York, Geoffrey wrote a letter to the Governor to introduce himself and express his hope that, given Rockefeller's patronage of arts, he might consider buying some paintings. When Nelson's curator, Carol Uht, received his letter she exclaimed that:

> of the umpteen million people who are always sending and bringing in their work, this is, by far, the best [. . .]. He's evidently got quite a decent starting reputation in Europe – has been reproduced in ART INTERNATIONAL, is in the Tate, and Herbert Read is mad for his work.[16]

Miller wrote in agreement and suggested that as the prices for Geoffrey's paintings were so reasonable, Nelson should buy two for the collection.[17] Both acquisitions are early examples of Geoffrey's collage-paintings.[18] The large horizontal painting *Weeping Landscape* (1963) purchased by Miller is a packed assembly of gold and silver spray-painted impasto, frayed pieces of paper, and two twenty-five-cent coins that blink and shine through the thick paint into which Geoffrey has carved the work's title in cursive script: *weeping* across the top and *landscape* at the bottom (*plate* 3). Lines of barely legible text are scored in and around the words of the title, including Geoffrey's signature and, repeatedly, the word 'truth' and variations of the question, 'why are we afraid of truth?' Clues to the meaning of the phrases are perhaps to be found in the way in which the title of the work thwarts its own promise of landscape. The horizontal passages at the centre of the composition are insufficiently wide to imply an actual horizon line, and the two coins and the work's overall chromatic and textural grubbiness imply that if this is a landscape, it is one we must look down on, like skid-marks on a pavement or footprints in mud. This is no Rothko-esque imaginative window but a low-lying,

3 Iqbal Geoffrey, *Weeping Landscape*, 1963. Oil and mixed media on Masonite, 20 × 18 inches. Location unknown. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey. Photo: Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers, Art, Series C, Subseries 6: Cancelled Art Files, Box 14, Folder 75, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY.

frustrated arena of action and possibility. The two blinking coins imply that this landscape is within the United States. They also bring elements of found text and imagery into the painting. The word 'liberty' embossed on the George Washington side of one coin marries evocatively with the word 'truth' scribed again and again across the rest of the canvas.

Geoffrey's technique of producing glutinous, thickly painted works of abstraction began while he was still living in Pakistan. In *Epitaph* (1958), for example, he carved rather than painted the work's circular mandala shapes from the layers of oil, enamel, and epoxy resin on its surface, deliberately evoking the deep-cut grooves found on ancient clay seals of the Indus Valley across what is now Pakistan and northern India (*plate* 4 and *plate* 5). When Geoffrey travelled to London in late 1959, he carried the painting with him, and it was accessioned to the Tate Collection in 1962. This made the

4 Iqbal Geoffrey, *Epitaph*, 1958. Oil paint, enamel paint, epoxy resin, charcoal and bronze powder, 257 × 381 mm. London: Tate (Presented by A. S. Alley, 1962; T00539). © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

twenty-three-year-old Geoffrey one of the first, and certainly the youngest, South Asian artists in Tate's collection. It was one of his proudest achievements during the nearly three years that he spent in London, from January 1960 to November 1962.

In order to earn a living, Geoffrey qualified as an accountant and took a job in the City and made paintings from a small bedsit in Chelsea (*plate 6*). Geoffrey arrived in London during what Stuart Hall has identified as the first 'wave' of Black and Asian artists entering the city during the post-war period; a loose post-colonial diaspora that followed imperial connections and the promise of equal participation in London's expanding art world.[19] During his short stay, Geoffrey took part in twelve group and eleven solo exhibitions and forged what Iftikhar Dadi has characterized as a cosmopolitan 'calligraphic modernism' that charted diverse paths between modernist abstraction, Islamic ornament, and the traditions of 'home'.[20]

Once in London, Geoffrey's paintings became lighter and more gestural, inspired by the watery landscapes of fifteenth-century Japanese Zen master Sesshū Tōyō (*plate 7*).[21] The ink and casein work on paper, *Yourself* (1963), for example, is a cursive tangle of drips, crosses, and ambiguous glyphic forms using Latin and Urdu-Arabic alphabets that taunt the viewer with potential legibility but ultimately unravel back into pure abstraction (*plate 8*). Critics lauded Geoffrey's 'capacity to lean across from one civilization to another without losing his balance' (John Russell); his work being 'a bridge between two cultures' (Norbert Lynton), and that his reputation in Europe was 'as miraculous as if he had safely crossed the intervening oceans in a rowing boat' (Herbert Read).[22] Despite the optimistic claims of his supporters, Geoffrey's time in London was marked by financial precarity and struggle. He seethed at the rising anti-immigrant sentiment of the 1960s and its direct role in his practical struggles

to find stable professional employment as a lawyer or accountant, or even rent a permanent home. As he wrote in a 1966 essay, the British:

> did exploit the world on a concocted philosophy of 'equality': but when the British from the rest of the world found the fare to visit the Mother Country, the good old Mother Country shut the doors bang on their faces.[23]

So when the Huntington Hartford Foundation offered Geoffrey a residential fellowship in California in late 1962, Geoffrey relocated to North America. By March 1963, he was on the East Coast and an artist in residence at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Around this time, Geoffrey began integrating elements of collage or what he called 'fusions' into his paintings, inspired by the collages or *Merz* pictures of Schwitters.[24]

In the 1965 canvas *In Search of an Ideal Landscape*, Geoffrey layers watery black drips of paint over a scumbled sweep of cursive marks (*plate 9*). The arrangement recalls a summer thunderstorm, although again Geoffrey disrupts the sense of landscape with

5 Seal with two-horned bull and inscription, Pakistan (Indus Valley Civilization), c. 2000 BCE. Steatite, 3.2 × 3.2 cm. Cleveland: Museum of Art (Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund; 1973.160). Photo: Creative Commons Zero.

the green horizon line painted across the top rather than bottom of the composition. Barely visible and running from top to bottom between one of the right-hand streaks of black paint, Geoffrey has written Urdu words in pencil so lightly and hastily across the surface as to taunt non-Urdu-readers with potential meaning and Urdu-readers with the resulting illegibility. This push-pull between textual reference and aesthetic evasion also appears in the eye-catching cluster of Letraset transfers that sit between two large drips at the work's centre, disrupting the expressionist fluidity of the canvas with a mechanical yet no less formalist chromatic and compositional intervention.

6 Iqbal Geoffrey, London, 1962. Photo: © Estate of John Hopkins.

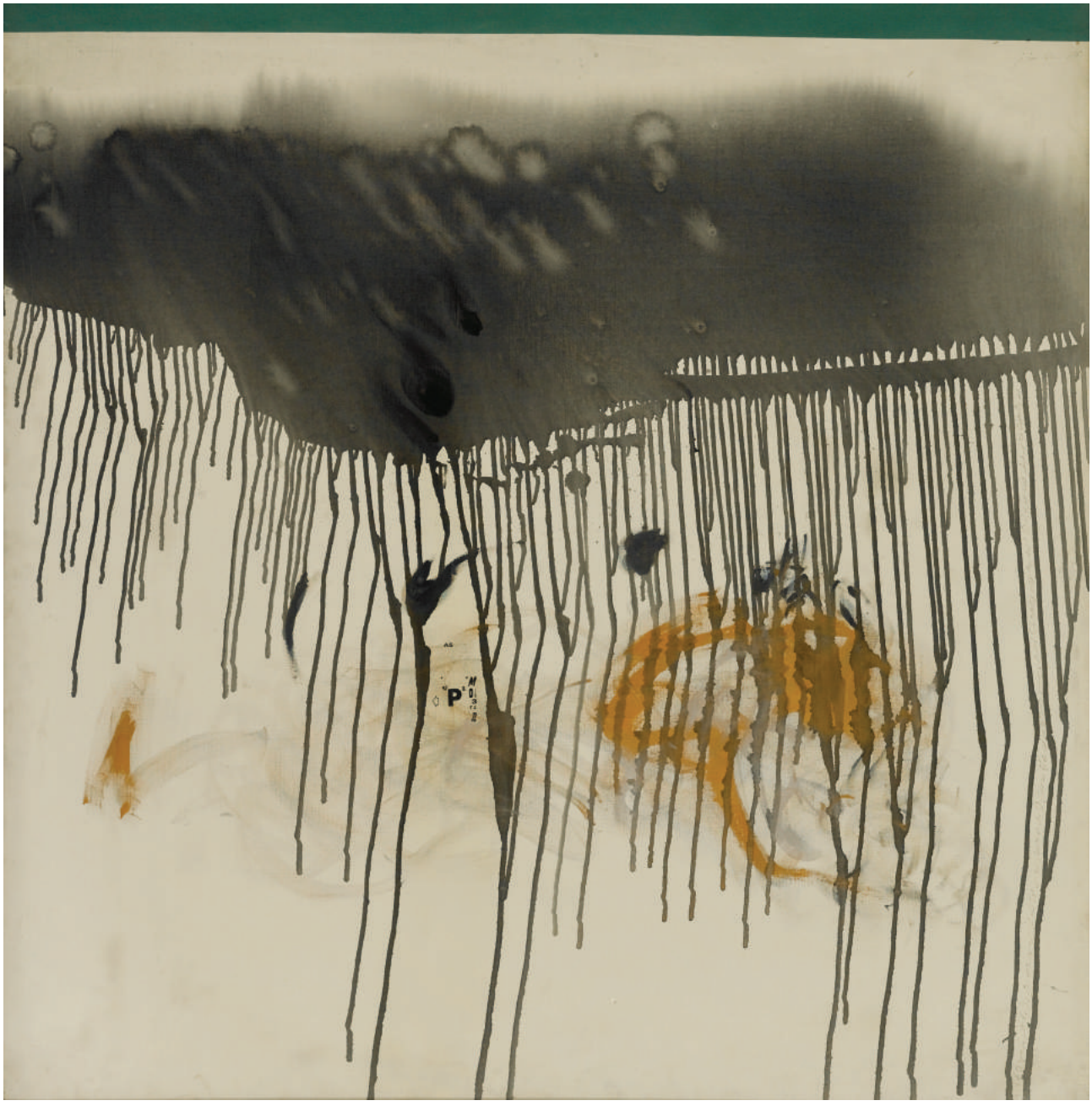
7 Sesshū Tōyō, *Haboku-Sansui*, splashed-ink style landscape, 1495. Ink on paper, 148.6 × 32.7 cm. Tokyo: National Museum.

Geoffrey's interest in collage, assemblage and text situated him alongside figures such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. This is made especially visible in mixed-media and print-based works such as the series of photolithographs also titled *In Search of an Ideal Landscape* that Geoffrey made during his studies at Harvard in 1965. Atop an elaborately calligraphed legal document, Geoffrey combines various evocative but ultimately disconnected images including silhouettes of fashion models, an image of a watch, cursive drips of paint, and an advertisement for one of his

8 Iqbal Geoffrey, *Yourself*, 1963. Ink and casein on paper, 55.2 × 70.5 cm. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, A. Shuman Collection (Abraham Shuman Fund; 64.484). © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

own exhibitions at Boston's Ward Nasse Gallery (*plate* 10). Yet contra to neo-dada's project to dismantle the autonomous art object through strategies of collage and textual intervention, Geoffrey remained firmly attached to the high modernist ideals of painting as a universal, intuitive, and autonomous exercise, closer in spirit to the outgoing aesthetic models of Jackson Pollock and abstract expressionism. He often expressed worries in his letters that this vaunted, formalist version of modernism was being destroyed by the current trends, and that 'Andywarholism' and protagonists of minimalism and conceptual art were betraying the 'universal truth' of art for big cheques, mass appeal, and pseudo-intellectualism.[25] Geoffrey's formalist claims may seem dubious in retrospect. Yet for artists from newly independent nations around the world, modernism meant many things. What was often shared, however, was the pursuit of an implicitly Eurocentric teleology of modernist innovation and cultural expansiveness alongside a recovery of local traditions from colonial neglect; a pursuit that was both local and universal, reparative, and future oriented.[26] In Pakistan, leading painters of the 1950s and 1960s fiercely defended the relevance of *tajridi*, or 'modernist painting', to their local context, along with the related values of autonomy, universalism, and formal transcendence.[27] Geoffrey's modernism also asserted these principles and his claim on them. His hauteur at movements like pop was due to their foreclosure of such high modernist values at exactly the point when artists like him had begun to explore their potential.

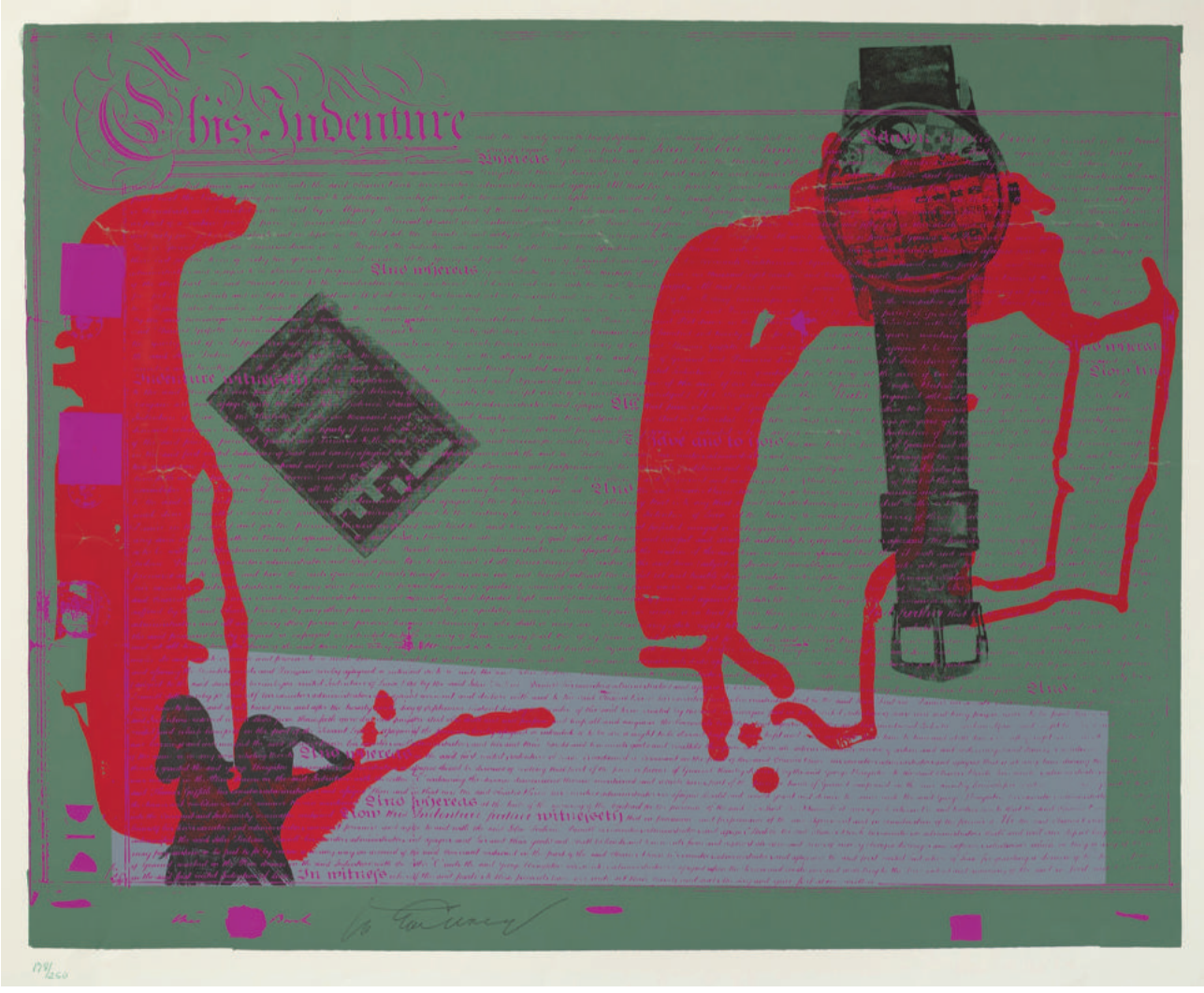
Geoffrey's decidedly formalist toggling of the fading heroics of mid-century abstraction and emerging strategies of collage, assemblage, and textual intervention laid claim to a combined personal and universal language, one that struck a chord for critics and galleries in the West. In the United States, Geoffrey's work was collected by institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and prominent collectors such as Ben Heller and Duncan Phillips.[28] He held solo exhibitions at Grand Central Moderns in New York, the Pasadena Art Museum, the Miami Museum of Modern Art, the Ward Nasse Gallery in Boston, and the Henri Gallery in Washington, DC, among others. In 1965, he won the Paris Biennial's highest Laureate award for a series of paintings titled 'The Great American Landscape', and even joined the ranks of *Who's Who in America*.[29] Writing in the catalogue for the Grand Central Moderns show, art historian H.W. Janson enthused that Geoffrey's paintings were 'moving testimony



9 Iqbal Geoffrey, *In Search of an Ideal Landscape*, 1965. Oil, pencil and Letraset on canvas, 121.9 × 121.9 cm. London: Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre (AC 885). © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

that, in the realm of art at least, we have overcome whatever divided us in the past; that the future belongs to the brotherhood of man'.[30] Janson's words recall the title of the major exhibition of photography, *Family of Man*, that had just concluded its world tour in 1962. *Family of Man* was an exhibition that had promoted its universal humanist vision via a platform of international, institutional cooperation, led by UNESCO and routed through MoMA as the major organizing institution.[31] The exhibition emblematizes the gap through which Geoffrey's own career often fell. For all of the universalizing spirit of Geoffrey's paintings and collages, the art world in which he worked was undergirded by the same mechanisms of Cold War internationalism and nationalism that thwarted his ambition.

When Geoffrey first arrived in the US in 1962, naturalization quotas from countries outside Europe such as Pakistan were also strictly limited. Although large East Asian communities existed in the United States, there were then just a few hundred thousand South Asians living in the country. This situation began to change with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.[32] The act replaced specific national quotas that privileged European citizens with equal quotas of 20,000 for all nations. At the same time, it raised the bar on entry, which delayed and mitigated its impact. The new act thus prioritized immediate family members of settled migrants, then skilled workers, and finally refugees, ensuring that the first waves of new



10 Iqbal Geoffrey, *In Search of an Ideal Landscape*, c. 1965. Screen print on paper, 29 × 34 inches. Flint, MI: Flint Institute of Arts (Gift of Mr Howard Capone; 1972.26). © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

immigrants into the US were ready-primed to contribute to the spoils of Western capitalism in the States. Like many of the progressive policies implemented in the US during the 1960s, the Act was signed against the backdrop of the Cold War and a recognition that America's discriminatory immigration system was tarnishing its international image.[33] It also did not secure Geoffrey's status, at least not immediately. For every new job or educational endeavour, he needed a new visa, forcing him to travel to Britain and often British Overseas Territories to submit new visa applications and even, as noted earlier, spending a period of expulsion from the country after a denied visa application in London in 1968.

To be from such a new country as Pakistan was a further point of isolation during Geoffrey's early years in the US. As Iftikhar Dadi explains in an essay on the Pakistani diaspora, a tendency to conflate South Asian identity with India rather than a diverse region of countries that *includes* Pakistan locates this and other South Asian diasporas within an imaginative, geographical, and religious lacuna in the United States.[34] The Pakistani - American diaspora is thus forced to navigate a peculiarly 'triangulated space demarcated by the tropes of "South Asia", "Islam", and the "West", understood in their entire baroque, overdetermined significations'.[35] This sense of precarity and cultural isolation compounded Geoffrey's frustration that any enthusiasm his work was generating had not yet translated into a place at MoMA, something that would truly affirm his artistic posterity and personal belonging in the US art world. Rather than accept this exclusion or engage in what he called 'apple polishing', Geoffrey went on the offensive, writing letters, making calls, and occasionally posting advertisements in New York newspapers quoting positive things that MoMA curators had said about his paintings. Inspired by a chance meeting with Marcel Duchamp in 1963, Geoffrey even urinated in Alfred Barr's MoMA office. He would later retell this story with misty-eyed glee, describing having to drink lots of water in advance of his subversive act and of how easy it was to gain access to the museum's private spaces in those days.[36] 'I grant my PR has been lousy', he wrote in a letter to Porter McCray at the JDRIII Fund, but museums were there to serve artists, he argued, and not the other way around.[37] If his art was being well received and reviewed, and if MoMA's curators and directors valued his paintings, then his behaviour shouldn't matter when it came to their support for his work.

Geoffrey's tactics were a direct attack on what he saw as curatorial self-importance and the false politesse of the white liberal art world.[38] He deliberately exposed how the clichés of genius, eccentricity, and rebelliousness otherwise used to explain away departures from polite behaviour were not available to him as a foreign artist of colour. In 1978, Geoffrey returned to this scatological theme in an extraordinary letter to Barr. 'Dear Alfie, Hi', it opened before continuing:

> You will recall that in 1963 I had declared that one day I will urinate on your grave.
> I have changed my mind. I will not urinate on your grave.
> Secondly, if you have read the TIME MAGAZINE of last week, you can imagine how much of the current art was foreshadowed by me 30 to 25 years ago.
> I don't want to dignify your past by feeling sorry for you, but I hope you have learned one terrible lesson: those who abuse power, abuse themselves. You cant [*sic*] masturbate history. It does not come. It overcomes. In your case it has overcome. You are nothing more than a footrest in history.
> Sin cerially,
> SYED IQBAL GEOFFREY
> Artist-Laureate of the United States.[39]

Geoffrey sent the letter on his legal stationary which he signed with a large back-to-front Geoffrey across the lower third in the manner of Leonardo da Vinci's mirror writing.[40] The *Time* article to which Geoffrey referred was a review of the recently opened Venice Biennale which included an evocative description of Italian artist Antonio Paradiso's *Toro e Mucca Meccanica* (*Bull and Mechanical Cow*) performed during the opening week of the Biennale. Perhaps inspiring the onanistic puns of self-abuse and overcoming, the piece involved a live bull named Pinco attempting to copulate with a mechanical cow which was, the *Time* reviewer noted, 'emblematic of the Biennale: a captive beast (*Natura*) struggling to inseminate a fictive one (*Arte*) under the gaze of an impervious public'.[41] Grafting the metaphor onto Barr, Geoffrey's pun similarly creates another image of an over-powered, over-excited, patriarchal force carried away with itself. The overcoming of Geoffrey's letter is also hopeful. It recalls the civil rights mantra that, 'we shall overcome'.[42]

Aesth*ethics*

What should we make of such a letter now, especially given Geoffrey's stated attachment to the universal, autonomous art object and ambivalence to artistic movements that sought to dismantle that ideal? What was the line between Geoffrey's artistic and legal practices and his justification for writing such an astonishing screed?[43] The easy answer would be to put the letter in the category of mail art and to explain away its impolitic nature as a dadaist joke, Duchamp reference and all. Although Geoffrey's letters are often highly poetic and visually interesting, for the most part they resist the category of art, even mail art. Instead, the letters form part of a larger project that Geoffrey dubbed aesth*ethics*. A compound of ethics and aesthetics, aesth*ethics* represents a philosophy of praxis that treats the pursuit of *justice* and especially *truth* as a categorical imperative.[44] In art, aesth*ethics* thus declares Geoffrey's pursuit of formalist 'truth'. Likewise in his legal practice, aesth*ethics* is the pursuit of justice through truth, and at any cost.

Geoffrey devised the concept in response to Ayub Khan's coup d'état in Pakistan in 1958, an event that galvanized the ethical stakes of Geoffrey's burgeoning career.[45] He was also reading Hindu philosophical texts at the time, following a personal trip to India. Although it is impossible to trace which texts Geoffrey was reading, he made frequent reference to the ancient India pedigree of his aesth*ethic* theory in letters and interviews from the 1960s onwards, most notably to the epic morality poem, the *Bhagavadgita*.[46] The self-sacrificing nature of Geoffrey's aesth*ethic* pursuit of 'truth' resonates with the lessons of the *Bhagavadgita*. As political theorist Uday Mehta explains, the poem advocates a morality of action that is heedless of consequences, and was influential to Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent radical politics for this reason.[47] In one passage of the poem, Krishna preaches the importance of intention rather than outcome when judging moral action: 'Your authority is in action alone, and never its fruits; motive should never be in the fruits of action, nor should you cling to inaction'.[48] There are compelling parallels with Geoffrey's theory of aesth*ethics*. Although writing a letter to Alfred Barr declaring him a footrest in history represents a blow to every kind of decorum, if the letter was truthful for Geoffrey, then he was compelled to write and send it anyway. Did that make the letter a work of art? Not necessarily. Geoffrey often expressed a reticence at enfolding the multiplicity of his career under the singular category of 'art'.[49] When Geoffrey was making art, writing letters, or pursuing the law, he was doing precisely that, making art, writing letters, and practising the law. While these procedures fell under the unifying category of aesth*ethics*, he drew important distinctions between them, thus insisting on their respective importance and sovereignty.

Geoffrey's insistence that his artworks were but one element of a larger project contrasts with canonical forms of avant-garde and conceptual art of the 1960s that instead sought to merge art with other bureaucratic, administrative, and everyday activities.[50] As Indian critic-curator Geeta Kapur argues, against such a tendency:

> not only is there no reason whatsoever for the rest of the world to subscribe to the vocational stringencies of the American vanguard, there are other larger battles to be taken account of: alternative avantgardes must emerge in opposition to the American power structures of art, academia and above all, politics.[51]

Geoffrey's 'alternative avantgarde' foregrounds the pursuit of *truth* above all else, and included but was not necessarily commensurate with an expanded category of art during the 1960s. In making these distinctions, Geoffrey could once again uphold his modernist commitment to and belief in the autonomous artwork, in all of its aesth*ethic* 'truth'.

In the same year that he devised the term, Geoffrey also began burning his paintings as a form of quality control, eliminating paintings that failed to live up to that truth or that had been obstructed from achieving it by external factors. When Geoffrey sent a painting as a wedding gift to Nelson Rockefeller in 1963 that had to be returned since the Governor was not allowed to accept gifts, for example, Geoffrey burned the work, 'because it wouldn't have been right to sell it to somebody else'.[52] The aesth*ethic* truth of the painting had been compromised by its rejection and could therefore no longer exist. In contrast to canonical instances of burning artworks as a tactic to *challenge* aesthetic autonomy or mark a strategic break with the medium of painting (for example, Gustav Metzger's 'Auto-Destructive Art' and John Baldessari's *Cremation Project* of 1970), Geoffrey's burnings were intended to reinforce the artwork's intrinsic value. They were, he has noted, 'important restatements of my art'.[53] Inevitably, the lines that Geoffrey drew between his artistic and other practices often blurred. Sometimes the courtroom became a space of theatre, or his letters and documents merged with his collages and works on paper (*plate 11*). Geoffrey also made occasional forays into performances, happenings, and readymades that he called works of 'UN-Art'. His definition and application of aesth*ethics* also shifted throughout his career. In a 1968 interview, Geoffrey joked that the concept was becoming fashionable, only now, 'they are calling it "Conceptual Art"'.[54] Despite all these complications and distinctions, the sustaining imperative of 'truth' and 'justice' grounded Geoffrey's multifarious practices, including his 1971 legal complaint against MoMA, to which I now turn.

Geoffrey v. MoMA

Geoffrey's 1978 letter to Barr is significant as the only remaining correspondence between Geoffrey and any MoMA curator within the museum's archives. Archives are of course selections rather than complete inventories. MoMA's institutional records are relatively concise and exclude from Barr's files documents including 'comments by or about living persons which would be hurtful'.[55] On the other hand, the archival holdings of the Rockefeller family are sweeping by comparison. The family's formidable instinct to preserve its legacy, and Geoffrey's own habit of Xeroxing, returning, and circulating his private correspondence makes it possible to reconstruct his relationship with numerous outside institutions including MoMA, which was of course founded in 1929 by Abby Rockefeller and her friends Lillie P. Bliss and Mary Quinn Sullivan.

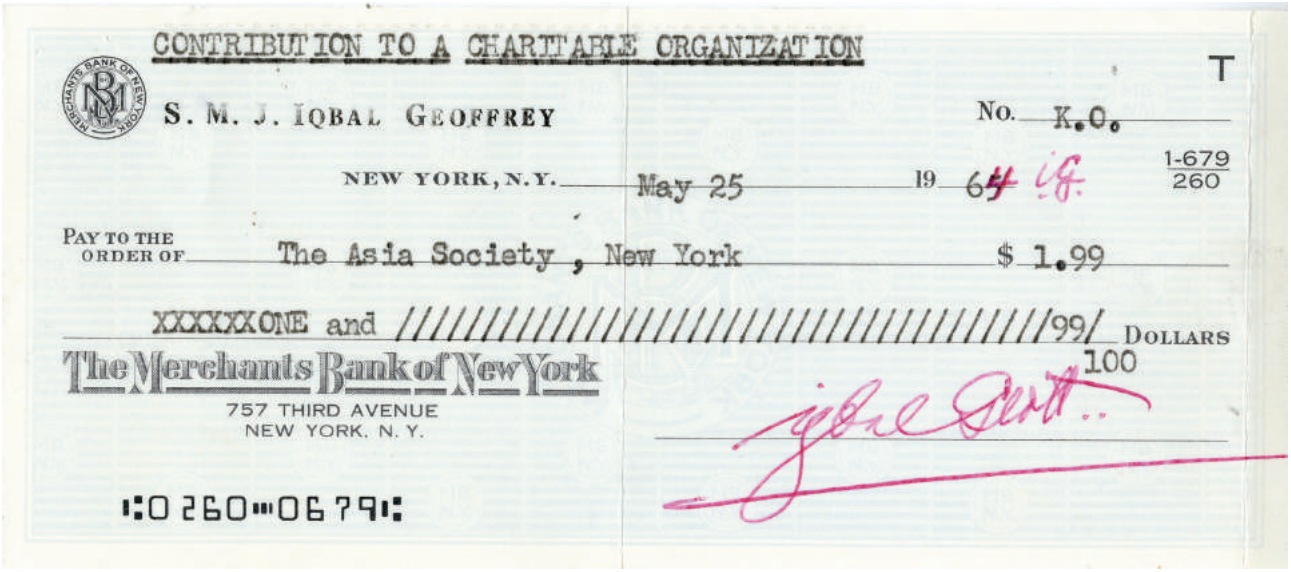
11 Iqbal Geoffrey, original collage and text over invitation for exhibition at Ward Nasse Gallery, Boston, 17 June 1966. Asian Cultural Council Records, FA1403, Grants, RG5, Folder 3, Box 838, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

Recognizing the bonds of family and friendship that tied MoMA to the Rockefellers, Geoffrey also went out of his way to project his complaints against the former institution to representatives of the latter. Geoffrey's letters expose what Inderjeet Parmar names the four great fictions of major American philanthropies during the twentieth century; that is, of their independence from the state, from politics, from business, and from ideological work (thus their support for 'non-ideological' activities such as science and art).[56] Staffed by the privileged beneficiaries of an elite East Coast network of private schools, colleges

and families, as Parmar notes, their 'ethnocentrism and sense of social, national, and racial superiority provide an instructive underpinning for an understanding of their "internationalism"'. This, Parmar writes, 'was an intensely "nationalist" internationalism [...] an internationalism that promoted American power as the "last best hope of mankind"'.[57]

Leveraging his status as a Harvard man and, what's more, being listed in *Who's Who in America*, Geoffrey networked his grievances throughout this elitist, internationalist sector of US political and cultural life. When JDR III failed to reply to his letters, Geoffrey wrote to his wife, Blanchette. When Geoffrey was unhappy with the director of one Rockefeller organization, he would write to the director of another. 'Oddball Joffrey', one staff member at the Asia Society titled a memo alerting colleagues to a recent phone call from Geoffrey requesting that the organization host a reception in his honour.[58] 'When am I going to receive the famous Asia Society hospitality?', he had asked its director Lionel Landry a few months earlier.[59] In one letter sent to the Asia Society in 1964, Geoffrey even enclosed a $1.99 cheque, declaring it to be for the establishment of an 'IQBAL GEOFFREY SPECIAL BENEVOLENT FUND TO PURCHASE TOOTI-FRUITIS AND NUTS FOR CONSUMPTION BY "ASIA" SOCIETY OFFICIALS JUNKETING IN ASIA ON THEIR "WORK" TOURS' (*plate 12*).[60] From the fund, Geoffrey suggested that fifteen cents be allocated for Lionel Landry to buy a Coca Cola when he next landed in Karachi; 'nobody can say that I am not compassionate', he added.[61] Such strictures, he later wrote to John D. Rockefeller III, were in the 'public interest', as the 'habitual junkets to Asia cloaked as "work tours" must be controlled and made a bit less frequent. They are antagonizing to well meaning [*sic*] Asians and they are causing unrest among lower echelons who too want a junket'.[62] Geoffrey's cheque is especially trenchant. It brandishes the gift as a form of obligation and the philanthropic gift, in particular, as a tool of power. It satirizes the Asia Society's aim to educate Asians about the West by reversing the usual terms of exchange. The offer of tutti fruits and nuts that might be presented in Asia as hospitality are turned into a benevolent donation. Geoffrey likewise puts the Asia Society behind the curve of US *capitalist* expansion in Asia with his teasing addition of Lionel Landry's Coca Cola. The paltry donation trivializes the Asia Society's work in Asia while also driving home the joke.

In April 1965, Geoffrey wrote one of many long letters to Porter McCray (director of the JDR III Fund and former director of MoMA's International Program) arguing


CONTRIBUTION TO A CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

T

S. M. J. IQBAL GEOFFREY

No. K.O.

NEW YORK, N.Y. May 25 19 64

1-679
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PAY TO THE ORDER OF The Asia Society, New York $ 1.99

XXXXXXONE and ////////////////////////////////////99/100 DOLLARS

The Merchants Bank of New York
757 THIRD AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

⑆0260⑈0679⑆

12 Iqbal Geoffrey, cheque sent to Wendy Sorensen, Asia Society, dated 25 May 1964. Asia Society Records, County Councils, FA110, Series 2, Box 126, Folder 1303, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

that MoMA's directors needed to mature to the point 'whereby an artist is judged solely by the merit of his work not by the colour of his jacket or the spellings & style of his signature'.[63] Its staff are being paid 'out of public funds', he argued, 'and they have mistreated my merit in a colossally malicious manner'.[64] The letter is gleefully bold. It deftly combines puns, alliteration, and poetic rhythm and is intended to rile McCray's nerves but also raise a laugh.[65] The letter also targets the perennial problem of MoMA's claim to judge artists according to merit or quality alone. He was not alone in pursuing this line of argument. In March 1969, for example, the Art Workers' Coalition picketed in MoMA's Sculpture Garden to protest at the museum's neglect of Black artists in the museum. In response, museum staff circulated a flier among visiting patrons affirming its selection policy:

> IN SELECTING WORKS OF ART FOR INCLUSION IN AN EXHIBITION OR THE COLLECTION DOES THE MUSEUM CONSIDER THE SEX, NATIONALITY, RELIGION, POLITICS, RACE OF AN ARTIST?
> No.
> WHAT CRITERIA DOES THE MUSEUM APPLY?
> Quality; historical significance; significance of the moment.[66]

The flier claims that the museum's selection criteria transcend race, sex, religion, and national origin. Yet as activists picketing the institution wanted to highlight, such appeals to aesthetic 'quality' and 'significance' were merely a cover for maintaining a racist and gendered status quo. As Charlotte Barat and Darby English have also recently argued, MoMA's undertakings 'have been marred by the use of supposedly colorblind criteria of "quality" and "importance" in judging art. For black people, women, and other cultural minorities, this has meant much doublespeak and little opportunity'.[67] In 1965, Geoffrey's confrontation with this doublespeak extended to applying for a clerical job at the museum. As he explained to McCray at the time, 'if merit alone is their criterion I should be able to get some job to enable me to prove my worth [. . .]. My application can raise some fundamental questions of human rights'.[68]

Geoffrey's application was in fact an ingenious use of the recently passed Civil Rights Act of 1964 banning segregation in public and education settings and making employment discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin illegal. As Geoffrey would have known, however, the Civil Rights Act was of limited help to artists. For one thing, intent to discriminate is very hard to prove. For another, art museums are intrinsically focused on the display and exchange of artworks (property) rather than artists, who also fall outside the protected categories of visitor or employee. Geoffrey's application therefore reframed his aesthetic case as an employment case that he was in a better position to prove given his many vocational qualifications. He sent his application to MoMA's then-director René d'Harnoncourt, explained why MoMA should purchase his paintings and then requested a job: 'I am a humanbeing [*sic*]', his letter began:

> I have degrees in law, economics and I am a qualified accountant. I also have 5 years of experience in office administration. I have studied history of art; am well versed in aesthetics and quite familiar with our art world of today.[69]

He offered to work for free for a probationary period, reminded d'Harnoncourt that his rights were comprehensively guaranteed by the New York State and expressed hope that his being born 'in the Orient' was not a disqualifying factor.

Geoffrey did not get a job, although he continued to write letters to and about MoMA until 1971 when he finally filed his discrimination complaint against the museum. He filed his case with the New York Division of Human Rights and named himself as the complainant, with Johnathan Hightower, Jennifer Licht, Kynaston McShine, William Rubin, and Alfred H. Barr as respondents (*plate 13*). The complaint begins as follows:

> Respectfully Sheweth: THAT the complainant is an American artist of international reputation and recognition. That the complainant is also Oriental, Semitic, Black, born in Pakistan, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and Male. The complaint [*sic*] is the only American artist in history who is also a highly qualified accountant, economist, art historian, international lawyer, metaphysician and published poet and author.[70]

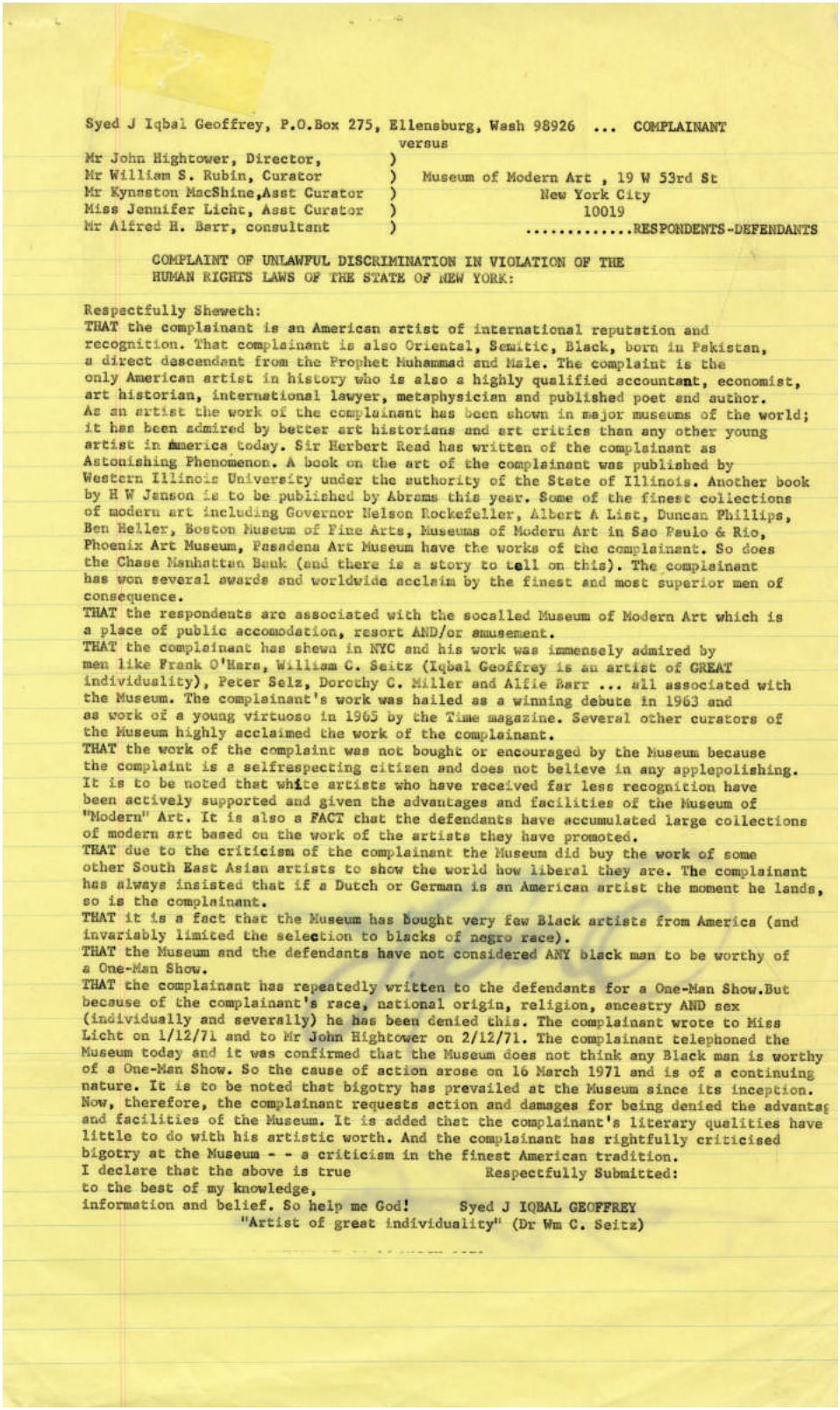
Geoffrey then turned his attention to the museum:

> THAT the respondents are associated with the socalled [*sic*] Museum of Modern Art which is a place of public accommodation, resort AND/or amusement. THAT the complainant has shewn [*sic*] in NYC and his work was immensely admired by men like Frank O'Hara, William C. Seitz (Iqbal Geoffrey is an artist of GREAT individuality), Peter Selz, Dorothy C. Miller and Alfie Barr [. . .]. THAT the work of the complaint [*sic*] was not bought or encouraged by the Museum because the complaint [*sic*] is a selfrespecting citizen who does not believe in any applepolishing [*sic*]. It is to be noted that white artists who have received far less recognition have been actively supported and given the advantages and facilities of the Museum of 'Modern' art. It is also a FACT that the defendants have accumulated large collections of modern art based on the work of the artists they have promoted.

Geoffrey went on:

> The complainant has always insisted that if a Dutch or a German is an American artist the moment he lands, so is the complainant. THAT it is a fact that the Museum has bought very few Black artists from America (and invariably limited the selection to blacks of negro race). THAT the Museum and the defendants have not considered ANY black man to be worthy of a One-Man Show. THAT the complainant has repeatedly written to the defendants for a One-Man Show. But because of the complainant's race, national origins, religion, ancestry AND sex (individually and severally) he has been denied this.

Aside from its unusual construction, Geoffrey knew the complaint had no chance of succeeding. Again, museums are under no legal obligation to consider race, gender, religion, or national origin in their selection of artworks. Geoffrey therefore took another tack, skirting a civil rights framework to appeal to higher ideals including his constitutional right to free speech and intrinsic *human* rights invoked by the name of the Division – the 'New York State Division of Human Rights' – where he filed his claim. Whereas civil rights are generally secured by law and the state, human rights are inalienable, universal rights that *transcend* the state. Over the 1950s and 1960s, this distinction emerged between universal human rights to dignity and equality



Syed J Iqbal Geoffrey, P.O.Box 275, Ellensburg, Wash 98926 ... COMPLAINANT
versus
Mr John Hightower, Director,)
Mr William S. Rubin, Curator) Museum of Modern Art , 19 W 53rd St
Mr Kynaston MacShine,Asst Curator) New York City
Miss Jennifer Licht, Asst Curator) 10019
Mr Alfred H. Barr, consultant) .....RESPONDENTS-DEFENDANTS

COMPLAINT OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION IN VIOLATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK:

Respectfully Sheweth:
THAT the complainant is an American artist of international reputation and recognition. That complainant is also Oriental, Semitic, Black, born in Pakistan, a direct descendant from the Prophet Muhammad and Male. The complaint is the only American artist in history who is also a highly qualified accountant, economist, art historian, international lawyer, metaphysician and published poet and author. As an artist the work of the complainant has been shown in major museums of the world; it has been admired by better art historians and art critics than any other young artist in America today. Sir Herbert Read has written of the complainant as Astonishing Phenomenon. A book on the art of the complainant was published by Western Illinois University under the authority of the State of Illinois. Another book by H W Janson is to be published by Abrams this year. Some of the finest collections of modern art including Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Albert A List, Duncan Phillips, Ben Heller, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Museums of Modern Art in Sao Paulo & Rio, Phoenix Art Museum, Pasadena Art Museum have the works of the complainant. So does the Chase Manhattan Bank (and there is a story to tell on this). The complainant has won several awards and worldwide acclaim by the finest and most superior men of consequence.
THAT the respondents are associated with the socalled Museum of Modern Art which is a place of public accomodation, resort AND/or amusement.
THAT the complainant has shewn in NYC and his work was immensely admired by men like Frank O'Hara, William C. Seitz (Iqbal Geoffrey is an artist of GREAT individuality), Peter Selz, Dorothy C. Miller and Alfie Barr ... all associated with the Museum. The complainant's work was hailed as a winning debute in 1963 and as work of a young virtuoso in 1965 by the Time magazine. Several other curators of the Museum highly acclaimed the work of the complainant.
THAT the work of the complaint was not bought or encouraged by the Museum because the complaint is a selfrespecting citizen and does not believe in any applepolishing. It is to be noted that white artists who have received far less recognition have been actively supported and given the advantages and facilities of the Museum of "Modern" Art. It is also a FACT that the defendants have accumulated large collections of modern art based on the work of the artists they have promoted.
THAT due to the criticism of the complainant the Museum did buy the work of some other South East Asian artists to show the world how liberal they are. The complainant has always insisted that if a Dutch or German is an American artist the moment he lands, so is the complainant.
THAT it is a fact that the Museum has bought very few Black artists from America (and invariably limited the selection to blacks of negro race).
THAT the Museum and the defendants have not considered ANY black man to be worthy of a One-Man Show.
THAT the complainant has repeatedly written to the defendants for a One-Man Show.But because of the complainant's race, national origin, religion, ancestry AND sex (individually and severally) he has been denied this. The complainant wrote to Miss Licht on 1/12/71 and to Mr John Hightower on 2/12/71. The complainant telephoned the Museum today and it was confirmed that the Museum does not think any Black man is worthy of a One-Man Show. So the cause of action arose on 16 March 1971 and is of a continuing nature. It is to be noted that bigotry has prevailed at the Museum since its inception. Now, therefore, the complainant requests action and damages for being denied the advantag and facilities of the Museum. It is added that the complainant's literary qualities have little to do with his artistic worth. And the complainant has rightfully criticised bigotry at the Museum - - a criticism in the finest American tradition.
I declare that the above is true Respectfully Submitted:
to the best of my knowledge,
information and belief. So help me God! Syed J IQBAL GEOFFREY
"Artist of great individuality" (Dr Wm C. Seitz)

13 Iqbal Geoffrey, 'Complaint of Unlawful Discrimination in Violation of the Human Rights Laws of the State of New York (Copy for Nelson Rockefeller)', 1971. Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers, FA340, Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13, Folder 116 (Iqbal Geoffrey), Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

enshrined in the United Nations' 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, and the 'civil' rights being fought and won in the courts and on a national level by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.[71] A later push for the universal cause of human rights emerged during and after the Vietnam War with a proliferation of human rights-based

organizations such as Amnesty International in the 1970s.[72] Geoffrey had already become familiar with the concept a decade earlier, however, when he wrote a thesis on human rights in Islam at Harvard in 1966, and went on to work as a Human Rights Officer at the UN. This was during a crucial moment for the institution in which Officers and Commissioners began to ponder whether the 1948 Declaration could be an enforceable, rather than a merely advisory document and setting the stage for an explosion of human rights discourses in the 1970s.[73]

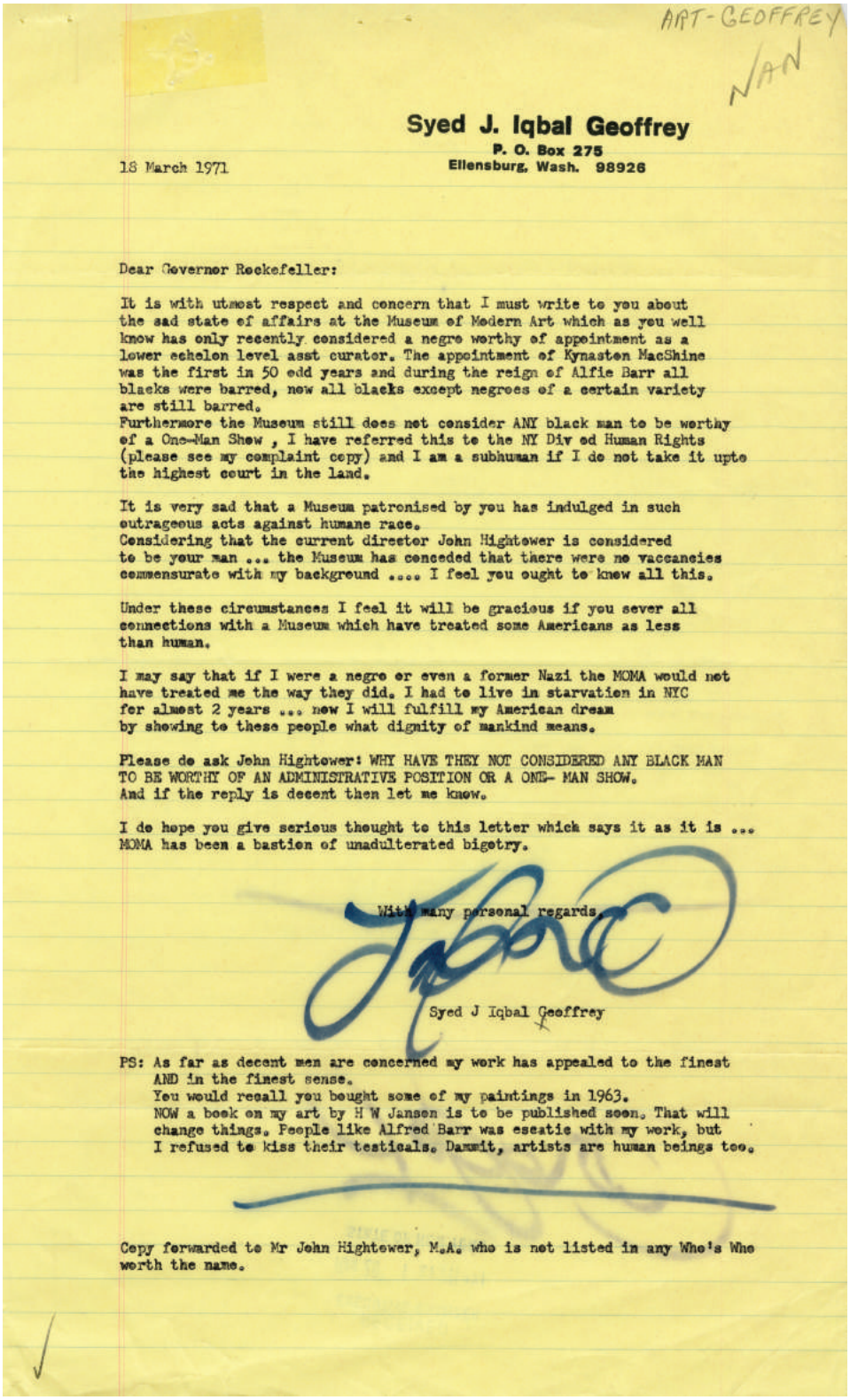
Geoffrey's straddling of the concepts of human and civil rights in his 1971 case against MoMA would have been informed by knowledge of this distinction but also the incongruous name of the division where he filed the case: the New York State Division of Human Rights, founded by the Governor Nelson Rockefeller just a few years earlier in 1968. Despite its name, the division was established to monitor and enforce *civil* rights law in New York.[74] That is, to mediate individual cases of discrimination that were covered by state and federal rather than international human rights law.[75] The division's evocative misnomer of a name may have inspired Geoffrey's own recourse to his higher 'human' as well as his 'civil' rights in his case filing, and galvanized him in making his case.

The fact that the Division functioned outside the regular court system, as a venue where individual claims could be mediated internally without cost, was also useful to Geoffrey. Through this institutional means, he could draw MoMA into a bureaucratic tangle without risking his legal credentials by being accused of filing a 'frivolous' case, and without having to spend any money.[76] Ultimately, the case only seems to have caused headaches for the museum's legal counsel Richard Koch, and never made it to mediation.[77] That it didn't succeed didn't mean that it wasn't effective. In many ways, the case acted like Geoffrey's letters: pursuing the imperatives of aesth*ethics*, countering MoMA's diminishment of Geoffrey's artistic practice by mobilizing his access to the law, and providing him with a series of provocative legal documents to circulate among his many interlocutors, including Governor Nelson Rockefeller (*plate 14*).[78]

Geoffrey's intervention resonates with Joan Kee's study of artists who turned towards the law in the United States during the 1970s, and their understanding of it as a potential mechanism of artistic and conceptual practice, as well as an institutional limit. For artists as varied as Hans Haacke, Jean Claude and Christo and Tehching Hsieh, specific laws and legal documents provided a rich terrain by which to consider the law not just as a set of 'paternalistic and forbiddingly esoteric rules imposed by a self-serving autocracy, but as a plastic, even liquid, condition collectively shaped by turns of language, aesthetic decisions, and individual behavior'.[79] For Geoffrey, however, a working distinction between his artistic and other practices sets him outside these canonical instances of institutional critique and conceptual practice. If there are crossovers in Geoffrey's 1971 case, it is in the unusual, even aestheticized language of his case filing, replete as it was with verbose and emotive bombast. Consider, for example, the closing statement of the document:

> It is to be noted that bigotry has prevailed at the Museum since its inception. Now, therefore, the complainant requests action and damages for being denied the advantage and facilities of the Museum. It is added that the complainant's literary qualities have little to do with his artistic worth. And the complainant has rightfully criticised bigotry at the Museum – a criticism in the finest American tradition. I declare that the above is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. So help me God!

It is necessary to parse Geoffrey's many self-identifications throughout the document, especially his claims to 'American' identity and legal traditions against the backdrop of parallel activist movements against the museum. At the opening of the document, Geoffrey identified as an:



ART-GEOFFREY
NAN

Syed J. Iqbal Geoffrey
P. O. Box 275
Ellensburg, Wash. 98926

18 March 1971

Dear Governor Rockefeller:

It is with utmost respect and concern that I must write to you about the sad state of affairs at the Museum of Modern Art which as you well know has only recently considered a negro worthy of appointment as a lower echelon level asst curator. The appointment of Kynaston MacShine was the first in 50 odd years and during the reign of Alfie Barr all blacks were barred, now all blacks except negroes of a certain variety are still barred.
Furthermore the Museum still does not consider ANY black man to be worthy of a One-Man Show , I have referred this to the NY Div od Human Rights (please see my complaint copy) and I am a subhuman if I do not take it upto the highest court in the land.

It is very sad that a Museum patronised by you has indulged in such outrageous acts against humane race.
Considering that the current directer John Hightower is considered to be your man ... the Museum has conceded that there were no vaccancies commensurate with my background .... I feel you ought to knew all this.

Under these circumstances I feel it will be gracious if you sever all connections with a Museum which have treated some Americans as less than human.

I may say that if I were a negro or even a former Nazi the MOMA would not have treated me the way they did. I had to live in starvation in NYC for almost 2 years ... now I will fulfill my American dream by showing to these people what dignity of mankind means.

Please do ask John Hightower: WHY HAVE THEY NOT CONSIDERED ANY BLACK MAN TO BE WORTHY OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION OR A ONE- MAN SHOW.
And if the reply is decent then let me know.

I do hope you give serious thought to this letter which says it as it is ... MOMA has been a bastion of unadulterated bigotry.

With many personal regards,

Syed J Iqbal Geoffrey

PS: As far as decent men are concerned my work has appealed to the finest AND in the finest sense.
You would recall you bought some of my paintings in 1963.
NOW a book on my art by H W Jansen is to be published soon. That will change things. People like Alfred Barr was ecstatic with my work, but I refused to kiss their testicals. Dammit, artists are human beings too.

Copy forwarded to Mr John Hightower, M.A. who is not listed in any Who's Who worth the name.

14 Iqbal Geoffrey, letter to Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, 18 March 1971. Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers, FA340, Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13, Folder 116 (Iqbal Geoffrey), Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY. © Estate of Iqbal Geoffrey.

> Oriental, Semitic, Black, born in Pakistan, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and Male. The complaint [*sic*] is the only American artist in history who is also a highly qualified accountant, economist, art historian, international lawyer, metaphysician and published poet and author.[80]

In the absence of an established narrative for Pakistan in the 1960s and early 1970s as already discussed, Geoffrey embraces, complicates and ultimately discharges with any fixed determination of identity.[81] Instead, he establishes himself as a multifaceted cultural and professional subject. He is at once a discriminated minority forced to move between multiple professions to survive but also 'highly qualified' in all his lines of work. While he is subject to racism, he is also the proud recipient of a distinguished cultural identity including the 'Syed' familial genealogy that ties his ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad and Arabia's ancient 'Semitic' cultures. Geoffrey further refracts this multiplicity through an insistence on an 'American' national identity, taking the supposedly inclusive immigrant 'melting pot' at its word. Significantly, he also identifies as 'Black', adopting the term as it was then deployed among anti-racist activists in Britain, where he had recently spent a year having been denied his US work visa in 1968.

From the late 1960s onwards, groups including the British Black Panthers (BBP) applied a unifying rubric of Blackness to all immigrants from Britain's former colonies. By the 1970s, notes Stuart Hall, the designation Black 'encompassed all the minority migrant communities', not 'as a sign of an ineradicable genetic imprint but as a signifier of difference: a difference which, being historical, is therefore always changing, always located, always articulated with other signifying elements'.[82] Clear evidence that this designation was in Geoffrey's mind is a 1968 *New York Times* article on Commonwealth immigration in Britain that included a profile of Geoffrey. The article framed Geoffrey's situation in terms of his difficulties finding a job: 'While immigrants are welcomed in low-level jobs', writer Thomas A. Johnson explained:

> they find discrimination when they try to move up or apply for better ones [. . .]. Syed J. Iqbal Geoffrey, 30, recalled that when he arrived from Pakistan 10 years ago, with a summa cum laude degree from Government College in Lahore, he 'wasn't even qualified for a clerk's job'.[83]

As Johnson also explained, the collective term 'Black' was born of a shared experience of racism among Britain's recent immigrants and as an alternative to the generalizing and racist term 'coloured' and as an effort, Johnson wrote, 'to create smoother working relationships between divergent groups and to show identification with the American black revolution'.[84] In the United States, however, such solidarities were often delimited by variegated experiences of state and racial violence within the country, along with vastly different entry-points into the nation state. As Vijay Prashad outlines, the discriminations of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act constructed a situation in which South Asians in the United States have been cast as pliant, compliant, and hard working.[85] While this has provided South Asian communities with opportunities for class mobility, it has also perpetuated and reproduced anti-Black racism and white supremacy. Having cultivated these 'model minority' stereotypes, Prashad notes, 'white America can take its seat, comfortable in its liberal principles, surrounded by state-selected Asians, certain that the culpability for Black poverty and oppression must be laid at the door of black America'.[86]

Geoffrey didn't always move carefully through this dilemma. Although his confrontation with institutions like MoMA defied the obedient model minority stereotype, he adopted a patriotic bootstrap ideology of personal advancement through 'merit' and qualifications, and often minimized the struggles and achievements of Black Americans and Black artists, skirting an ambiguous (and not always careful) line between racial solidarity and misguided jealousy. In his letters and lawsuit, Geoffrey often complained that Trinidad-born MoMA curator Kynaston McShine had fewer professional qualifications than he did and was also born outside the United States. According to Geoffrey, it was vastly unfair that McShine had found a place within the institution while he had not. In this comparison, he shows a sorry lack of solidarity with McShine as a fellow subject of British Empire with a similarly vexed relationship to American national identity. Yet Geoffrey was not alone in wanting to challenge MoMA's rare accommodation of artists and curators of colour as insufficient or problematically selected.[87] A notable case was the organization of two parallel exhibitions of Black artists, painter-collagist Romare Bearden and sculptor Richard Hunt, both at MoMA in 1971. Mounted in direct response to activist pressure, the exhibition proved highly controversial given that Hunt, who famously resisted racial readings of his art and was widely seen as an establishment figure, was seen as unfairly benefitting from a racial struggle in which he played no active role and providing the museum with a 'palatable' example of Black art to celebrate. As artist and Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) leader Faith Ringgold wrote in a letter at the time, the exhibition was little more than, 'a WHITE ESTABLISHMENT BLACK TRICK, and an insult to the black community'.[88]

Another instance of institutional deflection was a specially commissioned investigation into diversity at the museum begun in 1970 in the face of activist calls for change. The final report of this study of 'Afro-American, Hispanic and Other Ethnic Art' at MoMA was dubbed the Byers Report and was published in 1971. While the report conceded that the 'American melting pot has been especially inhospitable to Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians and other groups who have been unassimilated, either by insistence or through choice', and that the museum must do more to widen its cultural remit, as Susan Cahan observes in her detailed account of the episode, most of the document turned out to be a tally of the museum's accomplishments when it came to inclusivity.[89] Much of the document is in fact dedicated to MoMA's Cold War international programmes, effectively displacing the concerns of artists of colour within the US onto the 'success' of the museum's diplomatic adventures abroad as Cahan also notes.[90] With extraordinary cynicism, the report recommended, for example, that the upcoming *African Textiles and Decorative Arts* exhibition (co-sponsored by Standard Oil) be properly marketed to the local Black community, and that the International Council should do more to encourage foreign governments to send exhibitions to MoMA. A recommendation that the museum investigate the ethnic breakdown of its staff is especially striking. The staff is presently dominated by whites, the report stated, and should 'recruit a staff with more of a "United Nations", "international" image, including some Negroes and Puerto Ricans'.[91] Rather than calling for a shift of institutional organization, the Byers Report advised that MoMA project a certain image. Yet what kind of image? The sentence evokes comparisons with United Nations press photos of multiracial children poring over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and world leaders engaging in cordial discussion (*plate 15*). By conflating Black and Puerto Rican Americans with a 'United Nations' or 'international' image, the report tacitly excludes these communities from the ideal of national belonging. It also bears witness to Geoffrey's argument that while

15 Children of the United Nations International Nursery School looking at a poster of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, precise date unknown. Photo: World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo.

'a Dutch or a German is an American artist the moment he lands', he and his Black and minority colleagues evidently were not.

Here, then, the 'international' is many things: a model of cultural togetherness mediated by institutions; a tool of Cold War power; and a substitute for the hard work of dealing with structural racism at home. South Asian artists only appear in the Byers Report as beneficiaries of MoMA's International Program and, aside from a few exceptions, it was not until the demographic impact of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act began to be felt in the 1980s and later during the global and 'multicultural' 1990s, that museums and galleries in the US began to recognize artists from South Asia in exhibitions and surveys of 'American' and 'Asian American' art at all.[92] By then Iqbal Geoffrey had moved on to new horizons and even more challenging opponents.[93]

Epilogue

MoMA *did*, however, mount a dedicated exhibition of South Asian paintings in its galleries in 1964. Titled *Recent Acquisitions: South Asian Painting*, the exhibition was a display of eight paintings from the region that the museum had recently acquired, including works by an Israeli and two Turkish artists. This small but revealing event emblematizes the international and diplomatic networks that underpinned the circulation of art from the political 'third world' during the Cold War decades and the bifurcation in

MoMA's programming in which Geoffrey found himself. Two paintings included in the exhibition by Iranian modernists Charles Hossein Zenderoudi and Faramarz Pilaram came into the collection from the Iranian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1962.[94] Turkish artist Bedri Rahmi's painting was executed during a visiting professorship at Berkeley, Indian artist Mohan Samant painted his inclusion during a Rockefeller Fellowship in New York, and although paintings by Vasudeo Gaitonde and Satish Gujral were acquired before their own stays in New York, both artists spent extended periods in the city in 1964 and 1968 thanks to Rockefeller and JDR III fellowships, respectively.[95]

As it happened, the exhibition was prematurely closed when MoMA's curators found that they needed space to display proposals for the renovation of Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC. Alfred Barr, then-director of acquisitions, noted to his curatorial staff via telegram his disappointment that the show would not coincide with the upcoming 1964 New York World's Fair, and that he had 'depended' on the show to 'represent non-European traditions which are otherwise not shown because of congestion on the third floor'.[96] However, given that he had been the one to propose the separate printmaking exhibition taking up the rest of the museum, Barr conceded that, 'I suppose the Asians must suffer'.[97]

Clearly, Geoffrey refused to suffer. His letters and lawsuits demonstrate his frustration that the national and internationalist spheres in which MoMA operated during the Cold War rarely came together for him, confounding his own 'search for an ideal landscape' and the universalist goals of his modernism. Geoffrey's response to this struggle also presents a dilemma and an opportunity for the study of 'global modernism' today. His courting of institutions like the JDR III Fund, the Asia Society, and MoMA often preceded the epistolary, legal, and even scatological assaults that erupted only after those institutions failed to celebrate or support his work as he wanted them to. It is true that Geoffrey's example would be easier to grapple with had he dismissed these institutional formations for their role in a long history of colonial modernity and in racist and nationalist forms of power. Geoffrey's career instead exposes the paradoxes of any emancipatory project that looks to tools of liberal democracy and the state (including the law, the museum, the university, and even the United Nations) to come to fruition. When Geoffrey mobilized the law, it was not as a closed system but as a starting point for social change and aesth*ethic* truth that could be abandoned or reconstituted when necessary.

Likewise, the furious, poetic, and often shocking defiance of Geoffrey's belligerence exceeded the institutional limits of the spaces in which he sought to gain and remake the terms of his belonging. As post-colonial and feminist thinkers including Frantz Fanon and Sara Ahmed have argued, racial disobedience and related feelings of shame and risk are deeply imbricated within the colonial regulation of respectability and dissent.[98] In refusing to be beholden to that regime, Geoffrey's astonishing bouts of mischief and animosity overflowed their institutional bulwarks. They recall Lisa Lowe's delineation of Asian American 'immigrant acts'. For Lowe, the 'immigrant act' emerges from a situation of dislocation and disidentification to make visible the fiction of the inclusive US 'melting pot' through dialectical, antagonistic acts of cultural and political production.[99]

Geoffrey's actions likewise challenge the tacit assumption baked into histories of Cold War modernism, that institutions like MoMA were impervious sites from which power flowed ever outwards onto an unknowing, unwitting global periphery. Geoffrey's letters, lawsuits, and artworks reveal how, instead, such institutions have been subject to their own forms of colonial fracture, reverberation, and backlash, and that the artists most subject to their gaze have also been the ones to understand it best.

Notes

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1 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Elizabeth Glaeser', 22 June 1968, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 4, Rockefeller Archive Center.
2 Hugh Wilford, 'American Friends of the Middle East: The CIA, US Citizens, and the Secret Battle for American Public Opinion in the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1947–1967', *Journal of American Studies*, 51: 1, February 2017, 93–116.
3 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Elizabeth Glaeser', 22 June 1968.
4 Iqbal Geoffrey, 'Complaint of Unlawful Discrimination in Violation of the Human Rights Laws of the State of New York (Copy for Nelson Rockefeller)', 1971, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.
5 Geoffrey maintained this spelling for his artist's name throughout his career but moved between different transliterations of his name including Jafri, Jaffery, and Jafree in his legal work. The most elaborate version of Geoffrey's name I have yet encountered is 'Syed Muhammad Jawaid Iqbal Geoffrey-ul-Bukhary-ul-Naqvi Shah, Pir of Slarpur IV (56th direct descendent of the prophet Muhammad'. A. G. Pym, 'It All Adds Up To Aeshethics (Not Mis-Spelt)', *Post-Mercury Series*, 23 August 1968, sec. Magazine Section, Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery Files, Tate Archive.
6 H. K. Burkhi, 'Wrong Man for Higher UN Job: Bid to Meet Criticism by Pakistan', *Pakistan Times*, 27 December 1966, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 4, RAC; Charles E. Lika, 'Burn This Book Before Reading/Ode to Savaronola', in *Re: J. Iqbal Geoffrey: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. David Luisi, Ellensburg, Washington, 1971, 40.
7 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Elizabeth Glaeser', 22 June 1968.
8 See Christine Ithurbide, 'Shaping a Contemporary Art Scene: The Development of Artistic Circulation, Networks, and Cultural Policies between India and the US since the 1950's' (RAC Research Reports Online, 2013).
9 Geoffrey was soon joined by his wife, and after a period of struggle, he found work in London as an accountant for Lion International Films. In 1969, he moved to Lahore and practised as an independent lawyer before the family was able to return to the US in late 1970.
10 See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, Berkeley, 2011; Susan E. Cahan, *Mounting Frustration: The Art Museum in the Age of Black Power*, Durham, NC, 2016; Darby English and Charlotte Barat, 'Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit', in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA*, ed. Charlotte Barat and Darby English, New York, 2019.
11 Saim Demircan, 'Strike MoMA', *Art Monthly*, 447, June 2021, 39–40; 'From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation? A Decolonial Perspective on the Crises of Contemporary Art', *October*, 165, 1 August 2018, 192–227.
12 Helen M. Franc, 'The Early Years of the International Program and Council', in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, ed. John Szarkowski and John Elderfield, New York, 1995, 108–149.
13 See Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina, London and New York, 2000, 147–154; Max Kozloff, 'American Painting During the Cold War', *Artforum*, May 1973; Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Chicago, 1983; Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, London, 2000.
14 Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Princeton, 2011, 12–13. See also Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Cambridge, MA, 2003.
15 Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 12–13.
16 'Carol Uht Memo to Dorothy Miller', 26 March 1963, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, Rockefeller Archive Center.
17 'Dorothy Miller Letter to Carol Uht', 23 April 1963, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, Rockefeller Archive Center. 'Carol Uht Memo to Nelson Rockefeller', 23 April 1963, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, Rockefeller Archive Center. The works were both paintings, *Weeping Landscape* (1963) and *Viewpoint* (1963).
18 Geoffrey, Iqbal, 2017. Interview by author, Lahore, 20 August 2017.
19 Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three "Moments" in Post-War History', *History Workshop Journal*, 61: 1, 1 January 2006, 5.
20 Iftikhar Dadi, 'Ibrahim El Salahi and Calligraphic Modernism in a Comparative Perspective', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 109: 3, 2010, 555–557.
21 Norbert Lynton, 'A Painter from Pakistan: Iqbal Geoffrey', *Art International*, 25 November 1962, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.
22 John Russell, 'Iqbal Geoffrey', in *Re: J. Iqbal Geoffrey: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ellensburg, Washington, 1971, 3; Norbert Lynton, 'A Painter from Pakistan: Iqbal Geoffrey', *Art International*, 25 November 1962, np. Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC; Herbert Read, 'Foreword', in *Iqbal Geoffrey: Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours, 1955–1961: Alfred Brod Gallery, 36 Sackville Street, London W1 in Aid of the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, 20 August–1 September 1962*, London, 1962, np.
23 Bruno Alfieri *et al.*, *Monograph on J. Iqbal Geoffrey and His Aesthetics in Search of an Ideal Landscape: Phases (1 to 4)*, Lahore, 1966, np.
24 Geoffrey, Iqbal. 2018. Interview by author. Lahore, 20 August 2017.
25 Pop, he also notes, means sin in Hindi – पाप, pronounced 'pop'. 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Carol Uht', 15 January 1966, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.
26 On the incentives and pitfalls of this pursuit in post-colonial modernism, see the following sample of sources: Geeta Kapur, 'Modernist Myths and the Exile of Maqbool Fida Husain', in *Barefoot across the Nation: M F Husain and the Idea of India*, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy, New York, 2010, 21–53; Anneka Lenssen, *Beautiful Agitation: Modern Painting and Politics in Syria*, Oakland, CA, 2020, 159–210; Kobena Mercer, 'Black Atlantic Abstraction: Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling', in *Discrepant Abstraction*, ed. Kobena Mercer, Cambridge, MA, 2006, 182–205; Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*, Durham, NC, 2015, 152.
27 Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia*, Chapel Hill, 2010, 124–131.
28 As listed in contemporaneous catalogues, monographs, and press releases including 'Iqbal Geoffrey: Paintings and Fusions' at Kovler Heman Gallery, Chicago, September–October, 1964, np. Thomas W. Leavitt, A. S. Alley, and J. Iqbal Geoffrey, *J. Iqbal Geoffrey: In Search of an Ideal Landscape*, Notre Dame, IN, 1967, np.
29 It is from the Paris Biennial that Geoffrey took the word 'Laureate' for his many self-appellations. While it was possible to self-nominate for the *Who's Who*, the publication's editors were extremely rigorous in their selections. 'Merely having a million dollars to play with, or being listed in a social register, is not sufficient credit'. Cedric Larson, *Who; Sixty Years of American Eminence: The Story of Who's Who in America*, New York, 1958, 128–129.
30 H. W. Janson, 'On the Art of Iqbal Geoffrey', in *Iqbal Geoffrey: Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours, 1949–1963*, ed. A. S. Alley, New York, 1963, np.
31 Roland Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', in *Mythologies*, New York, 1957, 100–102; Aslı Iğsız, *Humanism in Ruins: Entangled Legacies of the Greek–Turkish Population Exchange*, Stanford, CA, 2018, 73–106; John Szarkowski, 'The Family of Man', in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century at Home and Abroad*, ed. John Szarkowski and John Elderfield, New York, 1994, 12–37. For a more sympathetic reading of the exhibition see Fred Turner, 'The Family of Man and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America', *Public Culture*, 24: 1, January 2012, 55–84.

32 Between 1950 and 1960, only 1,973 people from India became naturalized in the United States, rising significantly over the next decade to 27,189 people. See Marilyn Fernandez and William Liu, 'Asian Indians in the United States: Economic, Educational and Family Profile from the 1980 Census', in *Tradition and Transformation: Asian Indians in America*, ed. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, Williamsburg, 1986, 150. Also, Jane H. Hong, *Opening the Gates to Asia: A Transpacific History of How America Repealed Asian Exclusion*, Chapel Hill, 2019. On early and pre-twentieth-century histories of South Asian immigration into the US see Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*, Cambridge, MA, 2015.

33 Despite the Act's numerical parity, these restrictions most benefitted immigrants from Europe. The Act also had disastrous consequences for Latin American migrant exchange by hardening the formerly porous southern border with Mexico. See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton, 2014, 258–259.

34 Iftikhar Dadi, 'The Pakistani Diaspora in North America', in *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in The US*, ed. Gita Rajan and Shajila Sharma, New Delhi, 2007, 42. See also Junaid Rana, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*, Durham, NC, 2011, 6, 75–76.

35 Dadi, 'The Pakistani Diaspora in North America', 43.

36 Geoffrey met Duchamp when Duchamp came to visit his exhibition at Grand Central Moderns. Urination thereafter became a theme in his work. Geoffrey, Iqbal, 2017, Interview by author, Lahore, 20 August 2017.

37 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Porter McCray', 15 August 1967, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 4, RAC.

38 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Porter McCray', 22 April 1965, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 2, RAC.

39 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Alfred Barr', 20 July 1978, Margaret Scloari Barr Papers (MSB: II.149), Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.

40 Geoffrey, Iqbal, 2018, Interview by author, Lahore, 13 October 2018.

41 Robert Hughes, 'It's Biennale Time Again in Venice: A Profusion of Flora, Fauna and Visual Metaphors', *Time*, 17 July 1978.

42 The gospel song 'We Shall Overcome' became a protest anthem during the Civil Rights Movement following the 1963 march on Washington, where it was sung by the crowd. For a full account, see Imani Perry, *May We Forever Stand: A History of the Black National Anthem*, Chapel Hill, NC, 2018, 147–159, 174–178.

43 When I showed Geoffrey a copy of the letter, he laughed at his younger self and noted that, 'maybe I was a bit arrogant in those days'. Geoffrey, Iqbal, 2018, Interview by author, Lahore, 8 November 2018.

44 Geoffrey has formatted the word in several ways including aesth*ethics*, aesthethics, aesth*ETHICS* and aesthETHICS. I will maintain aesth*ethics* throughout.

45 *Re: J. Iqbal Geoffrey; A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Luisi, 33; Iqbal Geoffrey and E. W. Johnson, *Geoffrey: Power and the Image*, Macomb, IL, 1969, 34.

46 Norbert Lynton, 'A Remarkable Asian Artist in Europe Today: Iqbal Geoffrey', in *Re: J. Iqbal Geoffrey; A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Luisi, 24. It is also possible that Geoffrey was reading texts on the idea of *rasa* (meaning literally the *taste*, *juice*, or *essence*, of a work of art) when he devised the term. Later in his career, Geoffrey drew further links between the imperatives of aesth*ethics* and his Muslim religious faith.

47 Uday S. Mehta, 'Gandhi on Democracy, Politics and the Ethics of Everyday Life', in *Political Thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, ed. Shruti Kapila and Faisal Devji, Cambridge, 2013, 101.

48 Chapter 2, verse 47, *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Laurie L. Patton, London, 2008, 29.

49 Even when pressed on this during interviews, Geoffrey insisted that his letters and legal practices stood on their own terms, in relationship *to* but not *within* the category of art.

50 For example, Fluxus' reframing of professional and everyday activities as artworks, Hans Haacke's administrative and labour-oriented forms of art as work, and Duchamp's later-life administrative and archival practices. See Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*; Elena Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge, MA, 2016, 276.

51 Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, New Delhi, 2000, 375.

52 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letters to Carol Uht', 17 July 1963, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC. Likewise, when Ali Imam, director of the important Indus Gallery in Karachi, selected a series of collages for a 1989 show of Geoffrey's work, Geoffrey burned Imam's selection and exhibited the rejects instead. Geoffrey, Iqbal, 2019, Conversation with author, by telephone, 20 October 2019.

53 Quoted in Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*, London, 1989, 52.

54 Pym, 'It All Adds Up To Aesthethics (Not Mis-Spelt)'.

55 This discretion extends to the subject of this article. MoMA did not give permission to reproduce an image of the above-mentioned letter. The museum did not have a formal archive until 1989, and no formal collecting policy before that. Although Geoffrey's correspondence is no longer available, I am certain that he would have written numerous letters to the museum. Evidence for this is in the few copies and replies that he forwarded on to the Rockefellers, and in the MoMA Library files, which includes an extensive folder of pamphlets and exhibition announcements from Geoffrey, presumably separated from his correspondence and maintained as part of a separate Library file. My thanks to Michelle Harvey at MoMA for her insights on the museum's preservation policies. See also 'About the Archives | MoMA', The Museum of Modern Art, accessed 13 August 2021, https://www.moma.org/research-and-learning/archives/about.

56 Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, New York, 2014, paperback, 5.

57 Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, 63.

58 'RE: Oddball Joffrey (MAS to BEG)', June 1966, Asia Society Records, County Councils (FA110), Series 2, Box 126, Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.

59 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Lionel Landry', 23 January 1966, Asia Society Records, County Councils (FA110), Series 2, Box 126, Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.

60 Equal to approximately twenty-five dollars in 2022. 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter and Cheque to Wendy Sorensen', 25 May 1964, Asia Society Records, County Councils (FA110), Series 2, Box 126, Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.

61 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Wendy Sorensen', 29 May 1964, Asia Society Records, County Councils (FA110), Series 2, Box 126, Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.

62 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to John D. Rockefeller III', 31 December 1966, Asia Society Records, County Councils (FA110), Series 2, Box 126, Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.

63 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Porter McCray', 6 April 1965, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 2, RAC.

64 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Porter McCray', 6 April 1965.

65 It should be noted that while McCray was often frustrated by Geoffrey's correspondence, he was invariably cordial and even understanding of Geoffrey's plight. McCray's assistant at the JDR III Fund, Elizabeth Glaeser, was even more sympathetic and developed a friendship of sorts with Geoffrey over the course of their correspondence.

66 Bates Lowry, The Museum of Modern Art visitor handout, 30 March 1969, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, MoMA Archives, NY. Quoted in Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*, 207.

67 English and Barat, 'Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit', 15.

68 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Porter McCray', 22 April 1965.

69 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to René d'Harnoncourt (Copy)', 29 April 1965, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 2, RAC.

70 'Respectfully sheweth' uses an archaic spelling of the word 'show', meaning to humbly prove or demonstrate to a judge or court. Geoffrey, 'Complaint of Unlawful Discrimination'.

71 On litigation as a civil rights tool see Stephen C. Yeazell, 'Brown, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Silent Litigation Revolution', *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 57: 6, November 2004; and Aryeh Neier, *Only Judgment: The Limits of Litigation in Social Change*, New York, 2012.

72 For debates on the periodization of human rights, see Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, Cambridge, MA, 2014; Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values*, Cambridge, 2017; Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Cambridge, MA, 2012.

73 Roger S. Clark, 'Human Rights Strategies of the 1960s within the United Nations: A Tribute to the Late Kamleshwar Das', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 21: 2, 1999, 308–341.
74 Thomas P. Ronan, 'Rockefeller Acts to Expand Rights: He Submits 11 Proposals to Legislature for Laws', *New York Times*, 11 April 1968. See also Jeffrey M. Stonecash, John Kenneth White, and Peter W. Colby, *Governing New York State*, Albany, NY, 1994, 43.
75 As Barbara Keys demonstrates, a historical slippage between these linked but different principles goes back to the 1940s when catch-all terms like 'freedom', 'justice' and 'human rights' blurred with the more concrete concept of 'civil' rights that emerged in during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, Cambridge, MA, 2014, 36.
76 On frivolous suits as a tool for social change see Deborah Rhode, 'Frivolous Litigation and Civil Justice Reform: Miscasting the Problem, Recasting the Solution', *Duke Law Journal*, 54: 2, 1 November 2004, 447–483; Kevin S. Klein, 'Removing the Blindfold and Tipping the Scales: The Unintended Lesson of Ashcroft v. Iqbal is That Frivolous Lawsuits May Be Important to Our Nation', *Rutgers Law Journal*, 41: 593, 2010.
77 In November 2019, I submitted a FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) request to the New York Division of Human Rights. New York privacy laws permit the release of documents unrelated to the Division's final determination on a given case and the archivists found no documents of that nature, confirming that the case didn't go further than an initial investigation. 'Siaka Paasewe, Records Access Officer, New York State Division of Human Rights, Letter to Gemma Sharpe', 15 November 2019. In 1972, Geoffrey filed a discrimination suit against Cleveland State University that did make its way into the courts. Lawyers for the university contacted Porter McCray for advice on the case and noted that they should also talk to Richard Koch at MoMA about the museum's 'episode' with Geoffrey. 'Porter McCray Letter to Daniel J. Loughlin (Squire, Sanders and Dempsey)', 29 June 1972, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 6, RAC.
78 'Iqbal Geoffrey Letter to Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller', 18 March 1971, Nelson A. Rockefeller Personal Papers (FA340), Series C, NAR Artist Files, Box 13. Folder: Iqbal Geoffrey, RAC.
79 Joan Kee, *Models of Integrity: Art and Law in Post-Sixties America*, Berkeley, California, 2019, 5, 10–12.
80 Geoffrey, 'Complaint of Unlawful Discrimination'.
81 Certainly, Pakistan was under intense scrutiny during the year that Geoffrey filed his case. Pakistan was then fighting a brutal (US-backed) war against the liberation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh. However, the contemporary, post-9/11 image of the country as a land of terrorism and violence had not yet hardened when Geoffrey made his way to the US during the 1960s, thus not preventing him from putting his multiple positive self-identifications into productive flux.
82 Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain', 2.
83 Thomas A. Johnson, 'Britain's Colored Immigrant Population, A Troublesome Legacy of Empire', *New York Times*, 11 April 1969, 50, Asian Cultural Council Records, Grants, RG5 (FA1403), Box 838, Folder 5, RAC.
84 Johnson, 'Britain's Colored Immigrant Population'. There are compelling parallels to F. N. Souza's body of paintings using exclusively black pigments. See Atreyee Gupta, 'Francis Newton Souza's Black Paintings: Postwar Transactions in Color', *Art Bulletin*, 103: 4, 2 October 2021, 111–137.
85 Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, Minneapolis, 2001, x, 11–20, 47–68, 74–82. More recently, scholars including Vivek Bald have explored exceptions and counter-histories to this narrative, including a long history of solidarity and intermarriage between South Asian and Black communities in Harlem in New York. See also Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*.
86 Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, 6.
87 See Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*, 238.
88 Faith Ringold, Letter to John Hightower, 14 October 1970, Curatorial Exhibition Files, Exh. #959, MoMA Archives, NY. Quoted in Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*, 238.
89 Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*, 240–242.
90 J. Frederic Byers III, 'Report to the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art: Committee to Study Afro-American, Hispanic and Other Ethnic Art', June 1971, 6–7, John B. Hightower Papers (JBH I.9.69), The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY. Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*, 240–242.
91 Byers III, 'Report to the Trustees', 30.
92 The landmark exhibition *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* held at the Japanese American Art Museum in 1997–98 included fifty Asian American artists from Japan, Korea, and China only. The 2008 volume *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* also examines artists of East Asian descent alone: Gordon H. Chang, Mark Johnson, and Paul Karlstrom, ed., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, Stanford, 2008.
93 In 1972, the State of Illinois called Geoffrey to the Bar. He briefly worked as an Assistant Attorney General in Chicago and then as an immigration lawyer. He also became a thorn in the side of the notoriously corrupt Illinois court system which tried (unsuccessfully) to disbar him in 1982 and again in 1984 for, among other things, sending inflammatory letters, suing unnamed parties under the pseudonym Judgeso N. Thetake, and for placing a notice in a local newspaper advertising an upcoming trial as a play with himself in the starring role. In 1985, Geoffrey moved permanently to Lahore where he passed away in 2021. One of Geoffrey's most prominent cases before his death was for the return of the Koh-e-Noor diamond to the Indian Subcontinent from the British Crown Jewels. Geoffrey argued that the diamond was illegally stolen by the British government during the colonial period. See William Dalrymple and Anita Anand, *Kohinoor: The Story of the World's Most Infamous Diamond*, New Delhi, 2016, 196.
94 Faramarz Pilaram's *Laminations* (*Les Lames*) (1962) and Charles Hossein Zenderoudi's *K+L+32+H+4. Mon père et moi* (*My Father and I*) (1962) notably came out of storage for the first time since this 1964 outing as part of the museum's protest against Donald Trump's 'Muslim ban' in February 2017.
95 Some of these details are outlined in the exhibition press release. 'Press Release', 10 October 1964, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records 1960–1969 (MoMA Exhs. 738.2), Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
96 'Alfred Barr Memo to René d'Harnoncourt', 11 July 1964, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records 1960–1969 (MoMA Exhs. 738.2), Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
97 'Alfred Barr Memo to René d'Harnoncourt', 11 July 1964. Julie Nicoletta, 'Art out of Place: International Art Exhibits at the New York World's Fair of 1964–1965', *Journal of Social History*, 44: 2, 2010, 499–519.
98 See, for example, 'On Violence', in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, New York, 2005, 1–51; Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, Durham, NC, 2014.
99 Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC, 1996, 9, 2.