

Shahzia Sikander

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Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Shahzia Sikander took up the traditional practice of miniature painting during Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's military regime, at a time when the medium was deeply unpopular among young artists. Sikander earned a B.F.A. in 1991 from the National College of Arts (NCA) in Lahore, where she received rigorous training from master miniaturist Bashir Ahmad. She became the first woman to teach in the Miniature Painting Department at NCA, alongside Ahmad, and was the first artist from the department to challenge the medium's technical and aesthetic framework. Sikander's breakthrough work, *The Scroll*, 1989–90, received national critical acclaim in Pakistan, winning the prestigious Shakir Ali Award, the NCA's highest merit award, and the Haji Sharif award for excellence in miniature painting, subsequently launching the medium into the forefront of NCA's program, which brought international recognition to this medium within contemporary art practices. The artist moved to the United States to pursue an M.F.A. at the Rhode Island School of Design from 1993 to 1995; from 1995 to 1997, she participated in the CORE Program of the Glassell School of Art at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

In the 1990s, Sikander continued to be a technical pioneer, engaging with miniature painting in novel ways to include large-scale floor and wall drawings, installations, multimedia works, and collaborations with other artists. The innovative work led to her meteoric rise internationally, as she participated in prominent exhibitions at leading venues in New York, including The Drawing Center (1997); Queens Museum, New York (1997); Whitney Museum of American Art (1997); and Deitch Projects, New York (1998). Her work was the subject of important survey exhibitions, in 1998 at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago, and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri, and in 1999 at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. Following a residency at Artpace in Houston in 2001, she began experimenting with video and animation, marking a critical turning point in her career.

Since that time, major solo exhibitions of Sikander's work have been held at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria (formerly Philip Morris) (2000); The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (2004); The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs (2004); The San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego (2004); Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (2005); Miami Art Museum, Miami (2005–06); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2007); Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2007); daadgalerie, Berlin (2008); IKON, Birmingham, U.K. (2008); Linda Pace Foundation, San Antonio (2012–13); Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen (2014); Bildmuseet, University of Umeå, Umeå, Sweden (2014); Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain (2015); Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Hong Kong (2016); and MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome (2016–2017), Honolulu Art Museum (2017); Sean Kelly Gallery (2020); Morgan Library and Museum, NYC (2021)

Sikander has participated in more than four hundred group shows and international art forums, including *A Selection of Contemporary Paintings from Pakistan*, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California (1994); *An Intelligent Rebellion: Women Artists of Pakistan*, Cartwright Hall, Bradford, U.K. (1994–95); 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg, South Africa (1997); *Three Great Walls*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (1997); *Global Vision: New Art from the '90s (Part II)*, DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece (1998); 3rd Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, GOMA/Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia (1999); *Greater New York*, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center (2000); *Conversations with Traditions: Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander*, Asia Society, New York, traveled to Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury, Vermont; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington; University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann

Arbor, Michigan (2001–02); *Elusive Paradise: The Millennium Prize*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada (2000–01); *Urgent Painting*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC, Paris, France (2002); *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2002–03); Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2003); *Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists*, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois, traveled to LSU Museum of Art, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts (2004–05); Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2005); *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006); *Global Feminisms*, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, traveled to Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts; International Triennial of Contemporary Art, National Gallery in Prague, Prague (2007–08); *ev+a 2008: Too Early for Vacation*, Limerick, Ireland (2008); *By Day, By Night, some (special) things a museum can do*, Rockbund Museum, Shanghai, China (2010); *Transformation*, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo (2010); Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2013); *Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s*, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, New Jersey (2015); *Ink, Silk and Gold: Islamic Art from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, traveled to The Ringling, Sarasota, Florida; Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Jacksonville, Florida (2015–17); *Lucid Dreams and Distant Visions: South Asian Art in the Diaspora*, Asia Society, New York (2017); *A Journey into the Great Unknown*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2017); *Witness*, KB 17, Karachi Biennale, Karachi, Pakistan (2017); Lahore Art Biennale, LB01 (2018); Asian Arts Initiative 25th Anniversary, Philadelphia (2018-2019); *Todas Las Tumas Sagradas*, Museum C3A, Cordoba, Spain (2019); *Eye-I, Self Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC (2019); *Transcendent: Spirituality in Contemporary Art*, BCA, Burlington, Vermont (2019);

Among the numerous awards, grants, and fellowships Sikander has received are the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (1997); Joan Mitchell Foundation grant (1998–99); South Asian Women's Creative Collective Achievement Award (1999); Commendation Award, Mayor's Office, New York (2003); Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, Medal of Excellence, Pakistani Government (2005); Jennifer Howard Coleman Distinguished Lectureship and Residency Program, OTIS College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (2005); MacArthur Fellowship, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (2006); Young Global Leader, World Economic Forum (2006–11); Berliner Künstlerprogramm, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Berlin (2007–08); Performing and Visual Arts Achiever of the Year Award, South Asian Excellence Awards, New York (2008); National Medal of Arts Award, U.S. Department of State (2012); ArtPrize in Time-Based Art, Grand Rapids Art Museum (2013); Asia Society Award for Significant Contribution to Contemporary Art (2015); and the American Academy of Religion, Religion and the Arts Award (2016); and the Shahneela and Farhan Faruqui Popular Choice Art Prize at the Karachi Biennale (2017).

Sikander's work is included in the permanent collection of prestigious institutions worldwide, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, California; Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas; Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol, U.K.; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Burger Collection, Hong Kong, China; Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford Museums and Galleries, Bradford, U.K.; DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece; Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; Linda Pace Foundation, San Antonio, Texas; MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Princeton University

Art Museum, Princeton, N.J.; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; The San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

In 2016, Sikander completed a site-specific video animation, *Disruption as Rapture*, 2016, commissioned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art on the occasion of the reopening of their South Asian galleries, and her first major public art commission, a 66-foot mosaic and 25-foot glass painting at Princeton University, unveiled April 2017. In 2019, Sikander created a 28-foot fountain in mosaic which is now installed permanently in Mid-Town Park, Houston, Texas. She is the first Pakistani-American to be inducted in the National Portrait Gallery Smithsonian (2017) and to win the inaugural US State Department's National Medal of Art (2012). Sikander has been appointed to the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers in New York City, where she currently lives. She also serves on the boards of Art 21 and the Rhode Island School of Design.