

ART COLLECTION OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE GENERAL
KARACHI, PAKISTAN



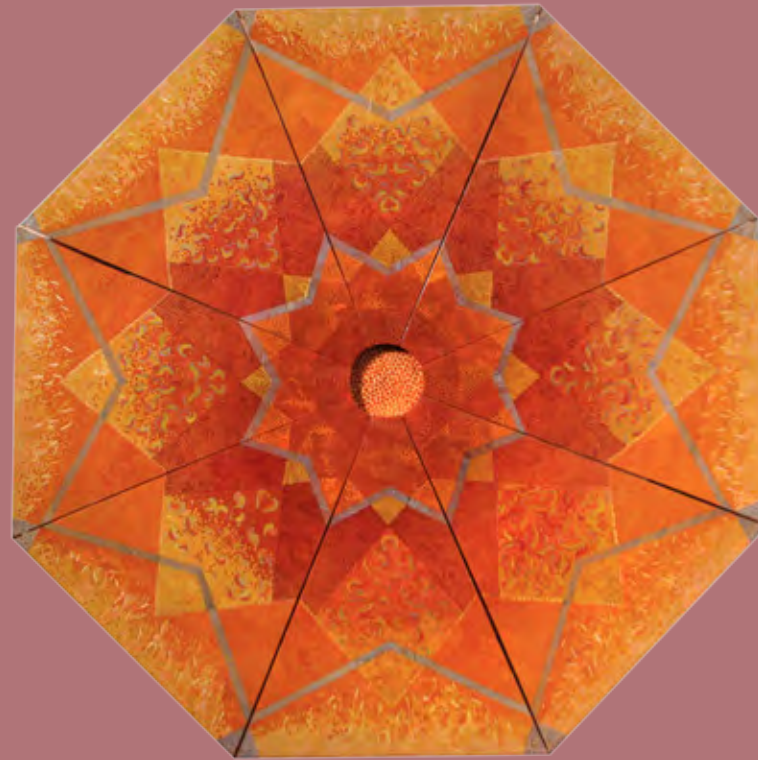


ART COLLECTION OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL

KARACHI, PAKISTAN

Ride 2, 2008
Hamra Abbas
Painted fiberglass and wood,
72 x 39 x 94 in. (182.9 x 99.1 x 238.8 cm)





Star, 2006
Lubna Agha
Acrylic on wood
40 x 40 in. (101.6 x 101.6 cm)

INTRODUCTION

The art collection of the American Embassy in Karachi, Pakistan, is a breathtaking survey of Pakistani culture and history from its villages to its metropolises. The past informs, and is changed by, the present as seen through Hasnat Mehmood's playful imitation of traditional miniature painting or through Imran Qureshi's reinterpretation and expansion of the classic Mughal frame. All the artists in this collection address the past in some way, whether by contending with the imposing history of miniature painting, or in the cases of Asma Shikoh and Faiza Butt, through their personal efforts to reconcile their dual nationalities. As the world's countries become increasingly linked through immigration and trade, we can hope for more work like that of Shahzia Sikander, who finds common ground between her Pakistani upbringing and her subsequent years spent in the United States. Pakistan also finds itself caught up in the waves of globalization—with strikingly creative results. Shezad Dawood recreates Koranic verse in neon; Adeela Suleman constructs a glistening sphere entirely from steel drain covers in a nod to the tradition of object displacement in Western Art. One theme that many are sure to find in common is respect for the environment—emphasized by Anne Lemanski in her *Deerfield, USA*. Many of the works highlight the dual identities that many of the artists face, either as Pakistanis living in the West, or as Westerners contending with the legacy of the Pakistani artistic tradition. We are excited to present this collection, which underscores the contributions that both cultures have made to each other over many decades of exchange.

HAMRA ABBAS

Hamra Abbas's versatile, mostly sculpture-based practice often appropriates imagery fraught with cultural significance. Her *Ride 2* is an oversized purplish-red fiberglass rocking horse based on popular imagery of the Buraq, a mythical creature known in the Islamic world as Muhammad's steed. Abbas has given the traditionally female human face of the steed some of her own features in a playful reinterpretation of a ubiquitous icon. Salima Hashmi, who selected the work for inclusion in the comprehensive survey *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan* at Asia Society New York, says that while the horse is "a culturally loaded icon," it is also seen everywhere in Pakistan, like a brand logo or cartoon character.¹

Hamra Abbas has bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan. She also received the Meisterschüler Prize at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. She is based in Boston, Massachusetts, and Islamabad, Pakistan.

Ride 2, 2008
Painted fiberglass and wood
72 x 39 x 94 in. (182.9 x 99.1 x 238.8
cm)



LUBNA AGHA

Lubna Agha's artistic career has spanned three decades, and she has produced works of photography, abstract minimalist painting, and figurative painting. The three works shown here are from a series in which she explores the traditional features of Islamic architecture through the medium of painting. The symmetrical, geometric architectural forms are described in Agha's signature shimmering, pointillist style: a symbolic marriage of Eastern and Western sensibilities that obscures the border between craft and art. Of her recent work, Lubna Agha says, "My fascination with the repetitive components of Islamic art—patterns and design—has led me to my current direction. Using repetition and pattern, the individual dots (nuqtas) of each work combine to achieve larger, more exciting compositions. The images that shape my American Pakistani art have been hovering at the outer edges of my consciousness for several years. It took a casual trip to North Africa for everything to take on a new clarity in my imagination. My inspiration stems from visual images that once were seen daily but are now part of history."²



Pillar, 2007
Acrylic on wood
10 x 48 in. (25.4 x 121.9 cm)

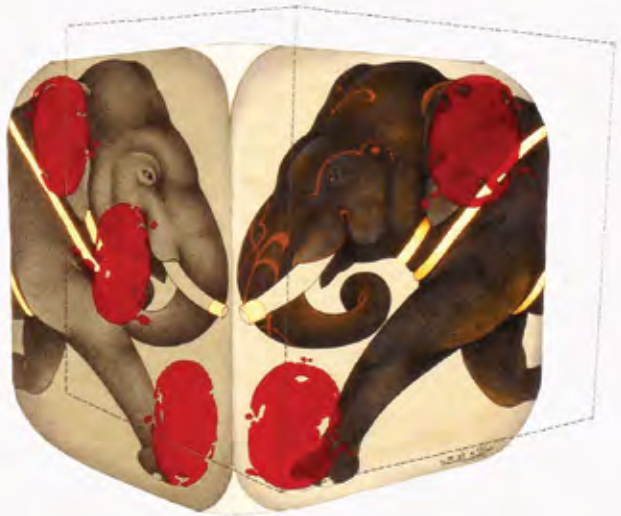


Fountain, 2006
Acrylic on canvas
54 x 54 in. (137.2 x 137.2 cm)

ASIF AHMED

Asif Ahmed studied traditional miniature painting in his native Pakistan. One work, *Untitled*, 2009, appears to have begun with two identical profiles of a king or ornately dressed man. However, one of the figures is partially erased, its details blending into the paper, leaving behind an eerie, ghostlike presence. In another work, also *Untitled*, two elephants, one painted with decorative lines, march purposefully toward each other with ambiguous intent. Both works speak to the “confusion of identities and fate,” which curator Aisha Zia Khan has discerned in his creations. “In my recent work I have tried to develop my own visual vocabulary to articulate my visual expression,” Ahmed writes. “Making a transformation of image is an important part of my work and that is why I have used traditional iconography derived from traditional historical miniatures and transform it in another visual expression.”³

Asif Ahmed earned a bachelor of fine arts in Miniature Painting from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, in 2004, and was the recipient of the 2005 Ustad Haji Sharif Award in Miniature Painting. He is represented by Twelve Gates Gallery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Untitled, 2009
Gouache on wasli
13 x 20 in. (33 x 50.8 cm)



Untitled, 2009
Gouache on wasli
13 x 16 1/2 in. (33 x 41.9 cm)

ALFREDO ARREGUIN

Alfredo Arreguin is originally from Mexico but has lived in the Seattle area for more than fifty years. His lifelong interest in conservation has informed his entire oeuvre, and the indirect plea for environmental preservation takes his audience by surprise. He is known for his highly imaginative imagery and his ability to discern overarching patterns in his detailed paintings of the natural world. "The jungle and the foliage, they are all patterns," the Arreguin says. "For me it is so easy to be able to translate from reality into the calligraphy that I invented. I use all the animals that already have patterns on them, and camouflage them into the land."⁴ In his *Cat Nap* from 2006, jaguars drape themselves lazily along the branches of a primeval tree and their distinctive black rosettes become the building blocks for the entire scene, from the grains of the wood to the shimmering sky and moon. Even the mischievous-looking monkeys appear to have taken on the jaguars' pattern and the sky's dreamlike hues. As the boundaries between flora and fauna dissolve, we are reminded of the interconnectedness of the planet's life forms.



Cat Nap, 2006
Oil on canvas
60 x 90 in. (152.4 x 243.8 cm)

SEAN CAVANAUGH

Sean Cavanaugh acknowledges the esteemed history of landscape painting while simultaneously departing from it significantly. In the traditional media of oil on linen, he creates hyper-realistic, distorted landscape formations whose imposing weight and physicality contrast sharply with their inexplicable position floating in space. The barren, rocky crags of *Golden Idol* and *High Peak Calico* suggest meteors or the windswept and sun-bleached landscapes of the Himalayas.

As the son of March Avery Cavanaugh and the grandson of Milton Avery, Sean Cavanaugh has wrestled with his family's legacy. "Growing up in a family of painters and photographers, I'd always thought that I would do something else," he says. "That something was never powerful enough to compete with making art. I try to be true to my own vision, not letting my family's imagery overly influence my artistic expression."⁸ Sean Cavanaugh was born in New York, New York, in 1969, and received a bachelor of arts degree in both art and environmental studies from Pitzer College in Claremont, California, in 1991. He now lives and works in New York, New York.



Golden Idol, 2004 ^
Oil on unprimed linen
22 x 26 in. (55.9 x 66 cm)

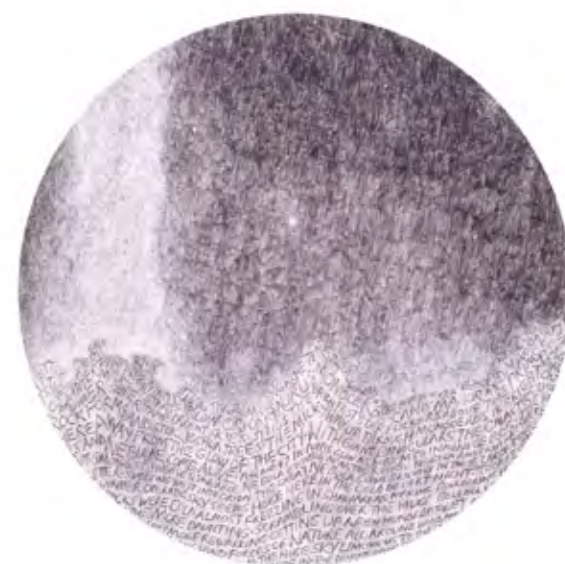
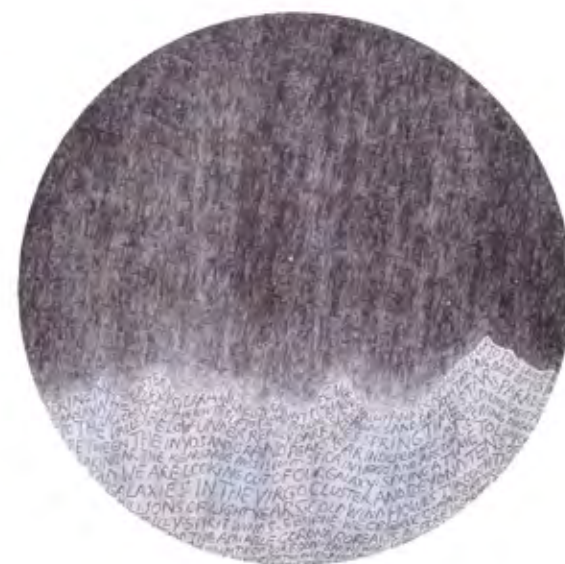
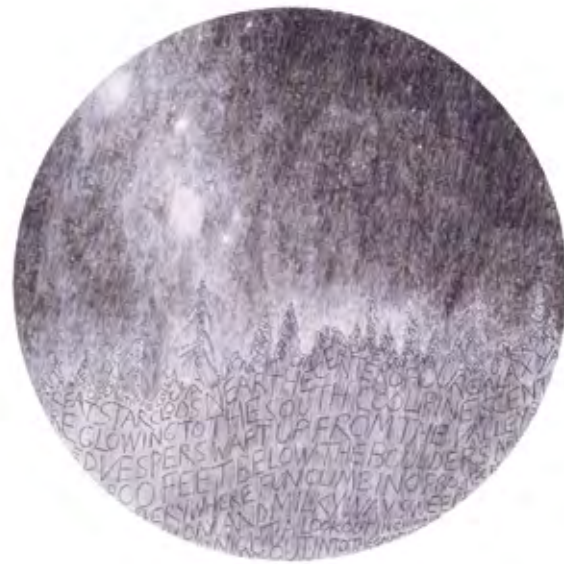


High Peak Calico, 2005 ^
Oil on linen
22 x 26 in. (55.9 x 66 cm)

RUSSELL CROTTY

Russell Crotty is an amateur astronomer. His meticulously detailed, black ink drawings are the result of empirical observation and patient stargazing. Many of his images are vignetted as if seen through the twenty-five-centimeter f/8 Newtonian reflector telescope in his homemade observatory in Malibu, California. This suite of prints depicts nighttime views of Malibu in each of the four seasons, highlighting the dramatic changes in both the landscape and the arrangement of stars as the earth changes position in its orbit. The archival inkjet pigment with multiple layers of silkscreen varnish in different sheens gives the effect of his signature ballpoint pen drawings.

Russell Crotty graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute and earned a master of fine arts degree at the University of California, Irvine, in 1980. He lives and works in Malibu, California.



SHEZAD DAWOOD

Shezad Dawood was born in London to a Pakistani mother and an Indian father, and much of his multimedia work is inspired by his varied cultural heritage. *By the Heaven of the Returning Rain* is part of a 2008 series constructed of neon and tumbleweeds, the latter representing his fascination with the myths of the American West. Each work in the series represents the artist's interest in one of the 99 beautiful names of God. The names each aim to describe a distinct aspect of the divine.⁹ Dawood successfully merges two seemingly incongruent elements: while its form is that of an overtly secular, mundane commercial medium that figures prominently in the history of Minimalist and Conceptual Art, the sculpture's content is deeply rooted in tradition and religion.

Shezad Dawood received a master's degree in 2000 from the Royal College of Art in London, England. He lives and works in London, England.



By The Heaven of the Returning Rain, 2008[^]
Neon
23 5/8 x 39 3/8 in. (60 x 100 cm)

KAUSAR IQBAL

Pakistani-born artist Kausar Iqbal is a painter of miniature art, schooled in the tradition of the masters. He is known for his boldly colored watercolors of anonymous, veiled women. In contrast, his *Untitled* from 2009 is a striking mandala comprised of four faceless men, whose heads meet in the center of the image, and where features are obscured by the geometric shape at the center of the wheel. Thoroughly immersed in the history and way of life in Pakistan, he thinks of his work as describing “my people and my culture, through my eye.”¹⁰

Kausar Iqbal is originally from a small village in the tribal area along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He studied sculpture and miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, graduating in 2006. He is represented by Twelve Gates Gallery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Untitled, 2009 >
Gouache on wasli
20 x 30 in. (50.8 x 76.2 cm)

ANNE LEMANSKI

Anne Lemanski's sculpture is driven by social and environmental commentary. It is a powerful tool for revealing the contradictions and injustice she observes in the world—from the position of women in society to the exploitation of animals. *Deerfield, USA*, is part of a recent body of work that focuses on the contentious relationship between humans and animals. Upon close examination, the surface of the deer is composed of images of suburban sprawl, pointing to the discrepancy between the bucolic name of Deerfield and the contemporary reality of the place. Almost every state has towns called Deerfield, allowing the work to stand for any American suburb with a name that is no longer reflective of its original qualities. When she created the work, Lemanski had the plight of displaced wildlife in mind—animals whose habitats are invaded and are subsequently “labeled a nuisance because they’re in backyards eating people’s gardens.”¹¹ Another striking work in this series, “Got Bovine Growth Hormone?” features a red cow printed with images of dollar signs, veterinary syringes, and a woman drinking milk; together, they offer a sharp critique of the abuses of factory farming and the deceptions of dairy and meat advertisements. “I really want to make people aware of the domino effect that man has on making use of animals,” she says. “We are all linked together.”¹²

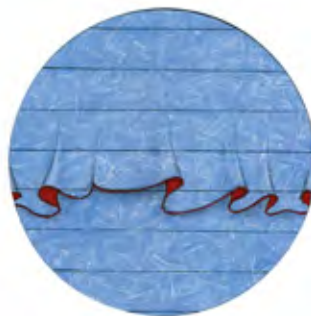
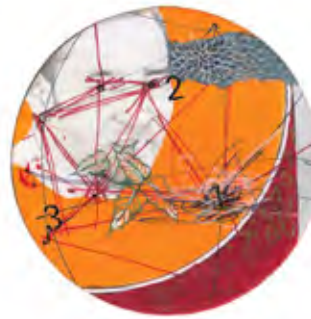
Anne Lemanski received her bachelor's in fine art from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, Michigan. Lemanski's work can be found in many private collections as well as the permanent collection of the Asheville Art Museum in Asheville, North Carolina.



Deerfield, USA, 2008
Archival inkjet prints on paper,
hand stitched to copper rods
36 x 34 x 7 in. (91.4 x 86.4 x 17.8 cm)

HASNAT MEHMOOD

As with many contemporary Pakistani artists, Hasnat Mehmood has felt compelled to engage with the history and practice of miniature painting, which has experienced a revival in the last two decades and is thought to be the cultural heritage of Pakistan. For his *I Love Miniature*, Mehmood copied the works of 13 artists who work in this medium, including Shahzia Sikander, who is perhaps the best-known practitioner of miniature painting. This exercise of precise and faithful copying is in itself a tribute to the history of the craft, which traditionally involves copying the work of established masters. As Shahzia Sikander recalls, when she was studying at the National College of Arts in 1992 in Lahore, Pakistan, her interest in the then-anachronistic style provoked the criticism from teachers and fellow students that “miniature painting would retard [her] creativity because it’s all about copying.”¹³ The format of the dots in Mehmood’s painting recalls Pop Art or works by the contemporary British artist Damien Hirst. *I Love Miniature*, through its miniature copies of miniatures, seems to provide a playful commentary on the craft’s daunting tradition.



LAURA OWENS

Classically trained in painting and drawing, Owens approaches her craft in a democratic, matter-of-fact manner “in order to take some of the preciousness or exclusiveness out of the history of the practice.”¹⁴ These four prints are the product of a two-week printmaking workshop in which Owens participated at Crown Point Studio in 2004. They share the “adolescent,”¹⁵ whimsical, figurative imagery of her paintings, and seem to have been executed with the pleasure of the decorative flourish in mind.

Laura Owens was born in Euclid, Ohio, in 1970. She received a bachelor’s in fine art from the Rhode Island School of Design and a master’s in fine art from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. Her work belongs to the collections of, among others, the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



25



26

< *Untitled (LO 272)*, 2004
Color spit bite aquatint
with soft ground etching
39-1/2 x 44-1/2 in. (100.3 x 113 cm)
Edition 40
Published by Crown Point Press

^ *Untitled (LO 270)*, 2004
Color spit bite and soap ground aquatints
with aquatint and soft ground etching
33 x 28 in. (83.8 x 71.1 cm)
Edition 40
Published by Crown Point Press



< *Untitled (LO 269)*, 2004
 Color spit bite aquatint
 25-1/2 x 15 in. (64.8 x 38.1 cm)
 Edition 40
 Published by Crown Point Press

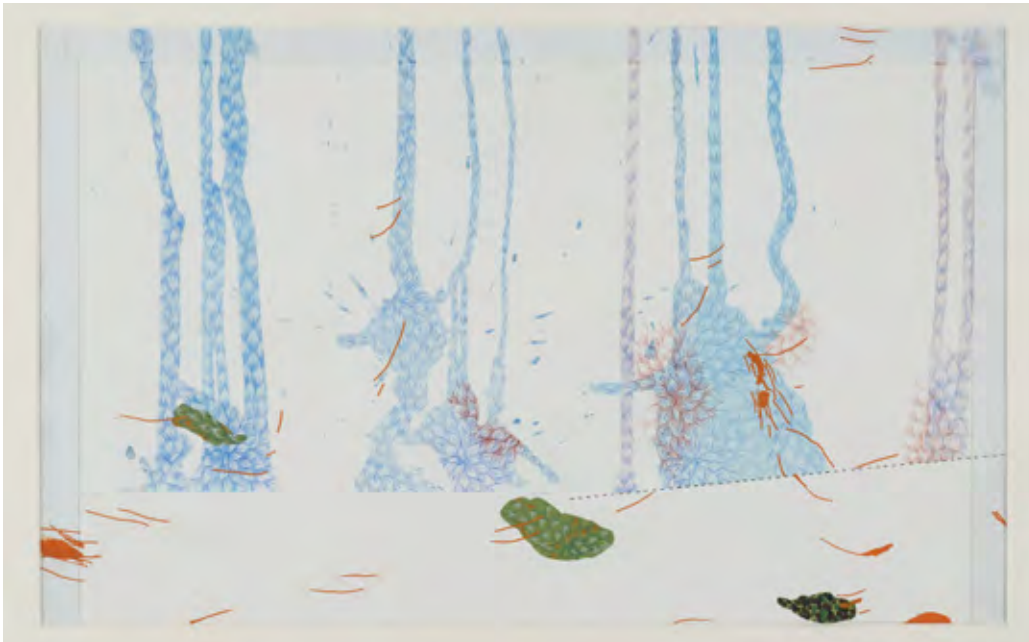
Untitled (LO 273), 2004 >
 Spit bite aquatint with soft ground
 etching and drypoint printed in blue
 22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)
 Edition 40
 Published by Crown Point Press



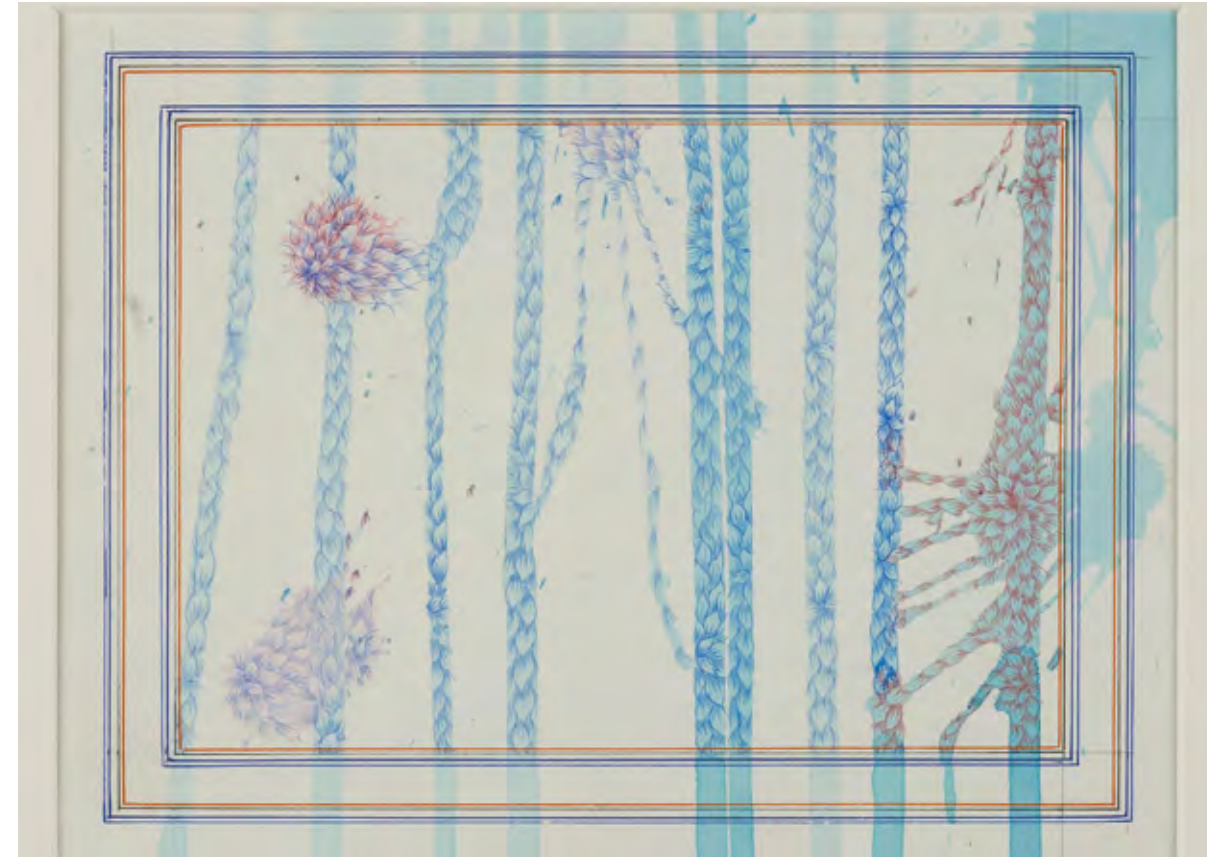
IMRAN QURESHI

Imran Qureshi is one of the most prominent and daring practitioners of contemporary miniature painting. Using the traditional materials of water-based paint on wasli (a handmade paper specifically used for painting miniatures), he emphasizes craftsmanship and the delicate repetition of decorative motifs in his work. His works included here, both titled *Leakage*, offer seductive, meticulously detailed surfaces that draw the viewer in and demonstrate his ability to redefine the Mughal tradition in contemporary terms. In one of the works, Qureshi supplies a traditional miniature frame, only to exceed its boundaries with his brush. Both works appear to be the result of leaked watercolor that bled onto the page and was subsequently transformed into organic, vine-like forms. The participation of chance and gravity is surprising and unprecedented in a medium with a tradition of disciplined, rigorous application.

Imran Qureshi was born in Hyderabad, Pakistan, in 1972. He teaches at the National College of Art in Lahore, Pakistan.



Leakage, 2007
Opaque watercolor on wasli
6 7/8 x 8 7/8 in. (17.5 x 22.5 cm)



Leakage, 2007
Opaque watercolor on wasli
9 1/16 x 14 9/16 in. (23 x 37 cm)

NUSRA LATIF QURESHI

Nusra Latif Qureshi is trained in the Mughal miniature painting tradition, and has developed a unique contemporary practice that draws on the rich visual and mythological heritage of South Asia. Her works often take a pictorial fragment of a Mughal or Rajput miniature as a starting point. Their exacting detail, reference to Hindu myth, and rigorous application allow them to be modern and traditional, aesthetically seductive and conceptually rigorous. *Island Dream* offers an alluring vignette of a naturalistically rendered couple embracing, framed by flat, purely decorative flora and fauna. *Sites of Abstraction* showcases Qureshi's facility with ornate pattern and detail, and recalls the tradition of henna decoration.

Nusra Latif Qureshi was born in 1973 in Lahore, Pakistan. She lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.



Sites of Abstraction, 2002
Gouache on wasli
15 3/4 x 11 1/4 in. (40 x 28.6 cm)

ASMA SHIKOH

Asma Shikoh moved to New York from Pakistan in 2002 sight-unseen. The first series she produced in the United States was called “Home,” highlighting the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of home for many recent immigrants. In *Van Wyck Blvd*, Shikoh takes the iconic symbol of the New York subway map and translates it meticulously into Urdu. This process appropriates the seemingly insurmountable challenge of negotiating a foreign mega-metropolis and makes the city her own. Shikoh writes, “Van Wyck Boulevard is the subway stop where my first home in the US was located. Urdu has been used not only to build a personal territory within the city, but also to announce my presence and my identity. Painting the subway map and translating minute, tiresome details has been therapeutic for an estranged person who is trying to identify with a new city, its streets, its landmarks, its avenues. The subway map is an integral part of New York City life, a very familiar image, without which no one would have any sense of direction. I have chosen to make the translated subway map, a ‘painting,’ so that its status of just being an object of functional value can be elevated.”

Asma Shikoh holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi, Pakistan. She lives and works in New York, New York.



Van Wyck Blvd, 2005
Pen and acrylic on paper on canvas
48 x 36 in (121.9 x 91.4 cm)

SHAHZIA SIKANDER

Shahzia Sikander's detailed works are inspired by Indo-Persian miniature painting, and she is admired for her ability to transcend the style's boundaries "without sacrificing its preciousness, vigor, or grace."¹⁶ She has studied both India's indigenous Rajput painting, which often features subjects from Hindu myth, and Mughal painting, which is Islamic in origin, more naturalistic in style, and more focused on historical events. She has also studied the Safavid School of miniature painting in Iran. Her format is frequently a hybrid of these aesthetic traditions: painted in detail but subsequently reinterpreted or subverted by ghostlike images overlaid on top and a "graffiti-like mode of marking."¹⁷ Both *Fright* and *Flight*, depart slightly from her typical format but are recognizable as miniature painting by their delicacy and intimate scale. The recurring railing motif functions alternately as a tower from which the Angel of Death threatens ominously, or a ladder by which the spirit can ascend toward the sky. In the larger works *I am also not my own enemy* and *Pathology of Suspension*, her use of calligraphy and the decorative Mughal borders demonstrate not only her mastery of classical practice, but—with her roots now in the West and her subject matter often influenced by Western events—her ability to extend Islamic vocabulary beyond its original framework. "I am also not my own enemy" is a fragment of a verse by the poet Ghalib from the Urdu poetry genre Ghazal. Thus the work fuses poetry with formal pictorial imagery, and traditional Urdu calligraphy with the imposing scale of much western art. A product of the intersection of Pakistani and American cultures, her work is, as one critic has noted, "essentially optimistic."¹⁸

Shahzia Sikander was born in Pakistan in 1969. She studied Mughal miniature painting under a traditional master at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, and later attended the Rhode Island School of Design.



Pathology of Suspension, 2008
Wool and silk tapestry with raised silk embroidery
106 x 73 in. (269.2 x 185.4 cm)
Edition of 5, Copyright the artist
Courtesy of James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai



Fright, 2001
 Color photogravure with
 soft ground etching and aquatint
 18-1/4 x 14-1/2 in. (46.4 x 36.2 cm)
 Edition 25, Published by Crown Point Press



Flight, 2001
 Color photogravure with soft ground and
 hard ground etching and water bite aquatint
 18-1/4 x 14-1/2 in. (46.4 x 36.2 cm)
 Edition 25, Published by Crown Point Press

LORNA SIMPSON

Perhaps best known for her large-scale photograph and text works that challenge conventional views of gender, racial identity, and historical narratives, Lorna Simpson has been contributing to the dialogue of contemporary art for nearly three decades. Her *Cloud* from 2005 is a visually stunning and mildly threatening image of a single cloud, spot-lit and suspended in the still air of a dark, polished stone gallery. The related film *Cloudscape* shows an African-American man in the same space, turned away from the camera and whistling a melancholy tune, as clouds appear to alternately protect and ominously shroud him.

Lorna Simpson was born in 1969 in Brooklyn, New York, and she received a bachelor's in fine art in Photography from the School of Visual Arts, New York and an master's in fine art from the University of California, San Diego. Her work has been exhibited at, among others, the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Miami Art Museum; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



Cloud, 2005
Serigraph on felt
84 x 84 in (213.4 x 213.4 cm)
Courtesy the Artist and Salon 94, New York

ADEELA SULEMAN

Adeela Suleman assembles found household hardware into sculptural forms, often juxtaposing nature-based imagery with implications of violence: peacocks perch on missiles, and parrots rest on twigs sprouting from suicide jackets. Her materials include drain covers, bolts, shower heads, and pipes. She also makes use of carved steel, which resembles the intricately carved designs, called *Chamakpatti*, of Karachi truck art. Suleman's *Samina* is a sparkling, delicate sphere constructed entirely of bolted drain covers. Despite the mundane, domestic origin of its material, the orb has an other-worldly, spiritual quality. Fascinated with the ways that context informs meaning, Suleman writes, "Form can be vague and contain immeasurable meanings. It is found objects that fascinate and motivate me: how one can change their meaning and form by simply putting them in a different context; how careful placement of these mundane objects can bring them into the realm of art. The everyday object, through its multiplication and assembly, becomes the delegate of a new, stimulating inner vision."¹⁹

Born in 1970 in Karachi, Pakistan, Adeela Suleman studied Sculpture at the Indus Valley School of Art and completed a master's degree in International Relations from the University of Karachi. She currently lives and works in Karachi, Pakistan.

Untitled, 2009
Mixed media
17 x 13 x 7 in. (43.2 x 33 x 17.8 cm)



ENDNOTES

1. Randy Kennedy, "Contradiction Remains Vital to Pakistan and Its Art," *The New York Times*, September 3, 2009.
2. Lubna Agha, "Artist Statement," published on the artist's official website, <http://www.lubnaagha.com/artists-statement.html>.
3. Artist Statement, courtesy of Twelve Gates Gallery.
4. Tracy Dingmann, "Hidden Treasures," *Albuquerque Journal*, June 8, 2003, pg. F1.
5. Kavita Ramdya, "Faiza Butt in the State of Things: Recent Art from Pakistan," *Modern Art Asia*, No 2 (February, 2010).
6. Kavita Ramdya, "Faiza Butt in the State of Things: Recent Art from Pakistan," *Modern Art Asia*, No 2 (February, 2010).
7. Faiza Butt, quoted on the website of Asia Society New York, <http://sites.asiasociety.org/hangingfire/faiza-butt/>.
8. Quotation courtesy of the artist.
9. "Selected Works by Shezad Dawood," Courtesy of Saatchi Gallery website: http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/shezad_dawood.htm.
10. Artist statement, courtesy of Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia.
11. Correspondence with the artist.
12. Sumpter County Gallery of Art, Press Release for "Anne Lemanski: Touch and Go" published on the Gallery's website: http://www.sumtergallery.org/Walters_Lemanski.html.
13. Aisha Zia Khan, "A New Vision: the Role of Miniature Painting in Hasnat Mehmood's Art," courtesy of Twelve Gates Gallery.
14. Kathan Brown, "About the Artist – Laura Owens", Crown Point Press Website, <http://www.crownpoint.com/artists/180/about-artist>.
15. Matthew Collings, "Getting Ahead in New York," *Modern Painters 17*, No. 2 (Summer 2004), 18.
16. Leeza Ahmady, "Shahzia Sikander," *Flash Art 37* (N/D 2004), 118.
17. Ferehteh Daftari, "Beyond Islamic Roots: Beyond Modernism," *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 43, Islamic Arts (Spring, 2003), 181.
18. Kathan Brown, "Shahzia Sikander: No Parking Anytime," *Crown Point Press Newsletter* (Spring 2002), 1.
19. Artist statement, courtesy of the Asia Society via their its website: <http://sites.asiasociety.org/hangingfire/adeela-suleman/>.



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