

Islamic Art from the Ulrich Museum of Art Permanent Collection



Shahzia Sikander
American, born Pakistan 1969

Afloat, 2001
Serigraph
Museum Purchase
2002.6

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Born and raised in Pakistan, Shahzia Sikander mixes traditional Islamic and Hindu motifs, Persian pattern designs, and a Western perspective to create artwork that reveals the superficiality of cultural borders and definitions, which she calls “surface identity.” Her art is based on traditional Islamic decorative miniature painting, a style in which the artist has extensive training and which is commonly considered “women’s work.”

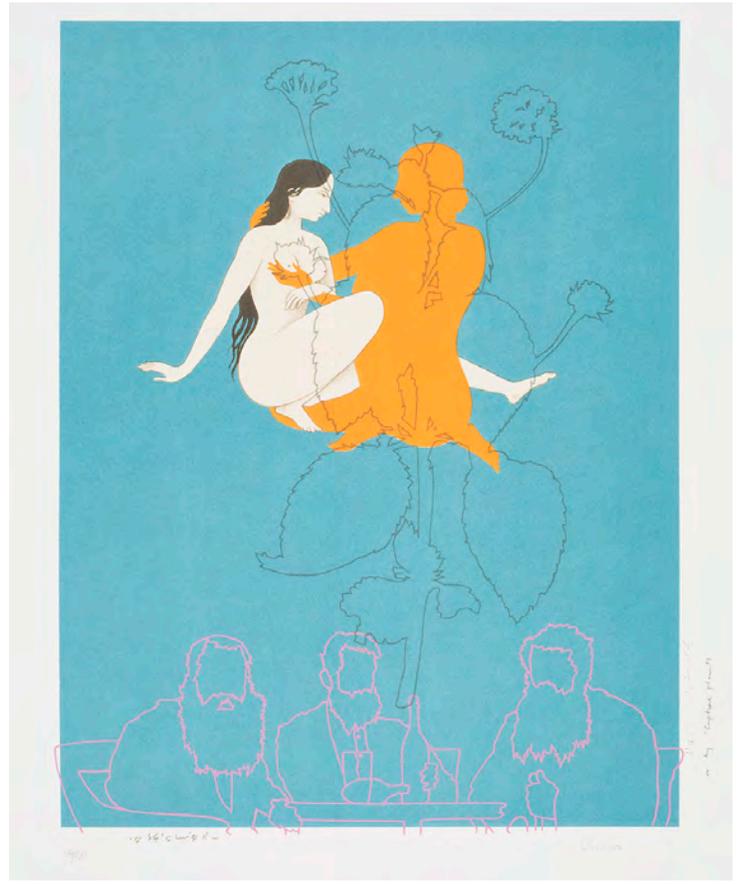
Sikander is interested in creating and exploring contradiction. Speaking of her work, Sikander states that “the focus is always to create icons that are neither personal nor cultural, but somewhere between both.” The synthesis of Muslim and Hindu culture that exists in her work stems from the cultural diffusion and conflict that exists between Pakistan and India. What she creates is not just an allegory of Western and Eastern cultural differences. Rather, what is revealed is the “nearness of difference” that exists everywhere in the world. This is a direct statement about inconsistency and contradiction that challenges our view of history, gender roles, and cultural identity.



Nusra Qureshi
Pakistani, born 1973

Three Songs of Devotion, 2003
Lithograph
Museum Purchase
2016.11

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Nusra Qureshi
Pakistani, born 1973

Gardens of Desire, 2003
Lithograph
Museum Purchase
2016.10

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Primarily working in painting, Nusra Qureshi's work explores themes of gender, colonization and power. Her works reference and incorporate the aesthetic of various texts such as South Asian illuminated manuscripts and botanical manuals. However, rather than solely mimicking these forms in her work Qureshi makes slight alterations, which aim to challenge or subvert the rhetoric that is embedded within the original texts.

The work *Gardens of Desire* references the ways in which colonization has “overwritten” and replaced the indigenous names of birds, plants and lands, while *Three Songs of Devotion* subtly plays with gender role reversal.



Zarina
Indian, born 1937

Rohingyas: Floating on the Dark Sea, 2015
Woodcut
Museum Purchase
2016.57

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Rohingyas: Floating on the Dark Sea references the plight of the Rohingya people, a Muslim minority group from Burma who are described as being among “...the world’s most persecuted people.” They have consistently faced persecution through being subjected to numerous human rights abuses and have been denied citizenship by the Burmese government. Their ongoing exodus has led to them being referred to as “Boat People” by the international media.

The stark print is meant to reference the condition of existing in what Michel Foucault refers to as a heterotopic space, which is a liminal, in-between space that does not exist in reality, which describes the condition of being stateless. The boat is “...heavy in symbolism,” referencing “travel and transit...exploration and escape.”