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News Desk. “Pakistani artist Shazia Sikander created a whole new genre in painting.”  
*Global Village Space*. June 18, 2021.

## Global Village Space



Shazia Sikander, the Pakistani artist, helped create a whole new genre of painting known as neo-miniature—all before she even finished her art degree.

The genre is rooted in traditional manuscripts and book illustrations and is a highly time-consuming practice based on Indian and Persian miniature paintings.

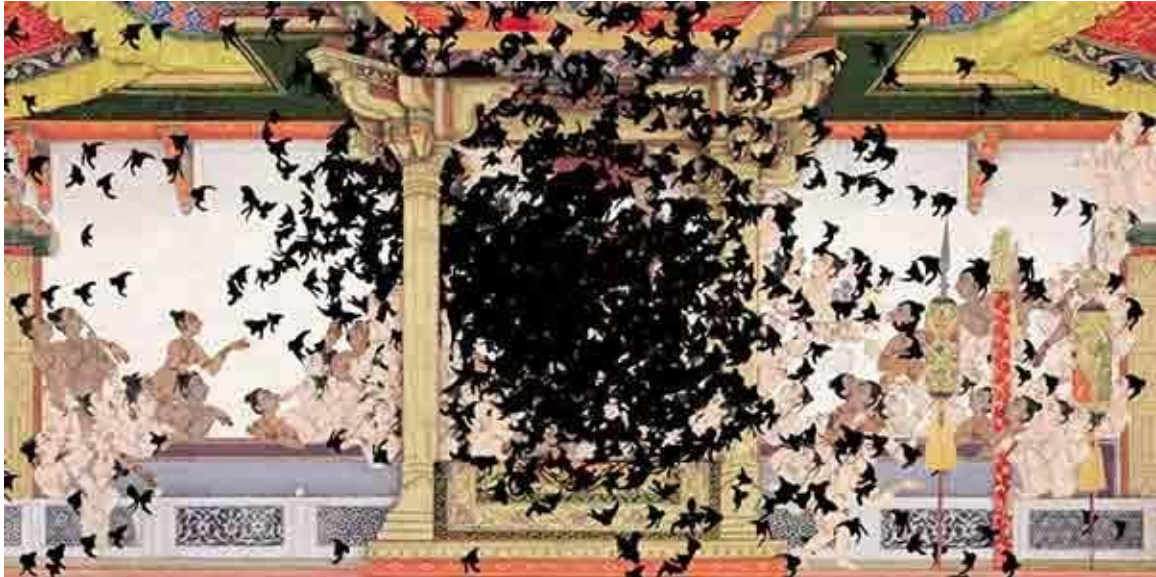
Sikander made *The Scroll* (1989-90) for her BFA thesis at the National College of Arts in Lahore, which represented the aesthetic challenge of a scroll's rigorous framework, and was more than five feet long and almost a foot high.

Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Shazia 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.

On her website, she describes her work as “Shazia Sikander is a citizen of the world. Over the course of three decades, Sikander has developed a multi-media practice that embraces the production of compelling objects that practically and theoretically transcend borders. Her meaningful artistic and social collaborations

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probe contested histories of colonialism, mechanisms of power, notions of language and migration.”



*Artwork by Shahzia Sikander celebrating womanhood and oneness with nature.*

In an exclusive interview from 2001, Shazia told Art21. “My whole purpose of taking on miniature painting was to break the tradition, to experiment with it, to find new ways of making meaning, to question the relevance of it.”

A survey of the first 15 years of her work, titled “Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities,” is now on view at the Morgan Library and Museum.

Since that first breakthrough in the medium, Sikander has received a MacArthur “Genius” award and raised the profile of neo-miniature painting to an international level.

The artist describes her work as “A continual process of investigating Western stereotypes of her Eastern heritage, power structures in both societies, and her personal identity.”

In one work, she depicts a multi-limbed Hindu goddess with a traditional Muslim veil covering her face, combining the iconography to address India and Pakistan’s “entanglement of histories.” This recurring theme in her work is “the juxtaposition of Hindu and Muslim imagery.”

“These are very loaded issues to take on,” Shazia told Art21, “because anything and everything associated with Islam is either terrorism or oppression for women.”