

Gandhi, Lakshmi. "Shahzia Sikander is the First Pakistan-Born Artist to be Displayed at the National Portrait Gallery," *The Teal Mango*, September 18, 2018.

## THE TEAL MANGO



Throughout her career, [artist](#) Shahzia Sikander has always been drawn to borders and boundaries and how she could explore those concepts through [art](#).

"Drawing is a fundamental element of my process—a basic tool for exploration," Sikander [once told Anjali Gupta](#). "I construct most of my work, including patterns of thinking, via drawing."

# SEANKELLY



*Shahzia Sikander's 2016 piece 'Singing Sphere.' Ryan Kelly Gallery*

While studying at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Sikander specialized in Persian and Mughal miniature painting. Her signature work, 1992's [The Scroll](#), was created while Sikander was still a student at the National College of Art. The piece was 13 inches high and five feet long.

The interconnected illustrations that made up "The Scroll" were considered a revelation in the 90's because they depicted the daily life of a modern Pakistani woman. In addition to its subject matter, "The Scroll" gained widespread attention from critics because it utilized miniature painting at a time when the medium was in decline.

"Shahzia took it to a new level," historian Ayesha Jalal [told NPR in 2016](#). "I mean, it was her thesis work that was sensational. Everybody talked about her work."

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Over the years, Sikander has incorporated several other mediums into her work including drawing, painting, video and printmaking. After earning her MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design, Sikander moved to New York. She told *NPR* that the city was where she felt she truly found an artistic home in the United States.

“This is the first place that I’d been in my three or four years in the U.S. [where] I wasn’t being seen through an ethnic lens,” she said. “I felt the same kind of confidence that I had when my work got recognized in Pakistan.”

In recent months, Sikander’s work has been gaining a larger audience among those outside of the art world. The acclaimed artist made headlines last year when she became the first [Pakistan-born](#) artist to have her work acquired by the Smithsonian’s National Gallery of Art. The work, a self-portrait, will be part of the gallery’s “Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today” exhibition, which is made up of portraits from the museum’s considerable collections.



# SEANKELLY

Sikander's profile was raised further among pop culture fans when her portrait of activist and Nobel Prize winner [Malala Yousafzai](#) was shown on David Letterman's Netflix talk show "My Next Guest Needs No Introduction..." in May. In addition to painting Malala, Sikander was also commissioned to paint the talk show host.

The [artist](#) described the experience of painting Malala as a powerful one. "Malala represent tremendous spirit and courage. She is synonymous to children's education and the its dire situation for so many across the world," Sikander said shortly before [the episode first aired](#). "She carries her purpose with humility, dignity and maturity which is empowering and inspiring."

*The Smithsonian exhibition ["Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today"](#) will run from November 4 to August 19, 2019.*

*Image of Shazia Sikander taken by Matthias Ziegler*