

SEANKELLY

Sikander, Shazia. "What Lies Beneath." *Harper's Bazaar India*. December 2018.

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THE PERENNIAL GAZE

Shahzia Sikander

What might otherwise have been a small-scale painting within a book or a private collection is brought into the public realm. *The Perennial Gaze* takes my interest in Islamic book arts and manuscripts of the Muslim world and makes it a part of a very pertinent dialogue in the current global political environment.

Made with broken glass pieces, in collaboration with a professional mosaic artisan, I wanted to dismantle the preciousness of the historical miniature painting—the rarefied object that was torn apart and sold during the colonial period, now most often found in Western museums.

In this work, the image of the female depicted as 'vessel' engages with the idea of the ownership of women's bodies and the ways in which their voices are erased from history. The beheaded feminine form is also a comment on the lack of female representation in the art world, political discourse, and broader misogyny. Form, with interlinked roots is self-nourishing and afloat, refusing to belong, be fixed or be stereotyped. With the focus on the #MeToo movement and women's treatment globally, I wanted my art to address the violence, silencing, and expunging of immigrant and women's narratives from history. ►



IMAGE COURTESY MARTINUS ZIEGLER

Shahzia Sikander is a Pakistan-born artist who lives in New York. Sikander was the first woman to teach in the Miniature Painting department at the National College of Arts, Lahore. From then on, her art practice has taken Indo-Persian miniature painting as a point of departure and created installations, animations, and collaborations with composers and authors—each time creating new feminist associations.

Image courtesy of Constance Mensch and Asian Arts Initiative. *The Perennial Gaze* by Shahzia Sikander was commissioned by Asian Arts Initiative as part of their 25th Anniversary project, (ex)CHANGE: History, Place, Presence. Major support for (ex)CHANGE: History, Place, Presence provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.