

Kunitz, Daniel. "Object Lessons: Shahzia Sikander." *Sculpture Magazine*. November 2020.

# sculpture

## object lessons

### Shahzia Sikander

► The sculpture is in bronze with varied patina. With its sinuous entanglement of the Greco-Roman Venus and the Indian Devata, it explores the "promiscuous intimacies" of multiple times, spaces, art historical traditions, bodies, desires, and subjectivities. In their suggestive embrace, the intertwined female bodies bear the symbolic weight of communal identities from across multiple temporal and geographic terrains. They evoke non-hetero-normative desires that are often cast as foreign and inauthentic, challenging the viewer to imagine a different present and future. The various patinas highlight the fact that classical painted statuary was polychromatic and not necessarily "lily white" as constructed over time in the popular imagination.

The ideas were drawn out first. To validate the two intertwined bodies and the incredible elasticity of their combined state, I worked with two female models and directed them. The balancing act with the live models was informative. It allowed me to work out the essential details of form, the movement in space, the gestures, the nuances in the tilt of their heads, the gaze, the cupping of the hand, the tug at the necklace, the several opposing forms and their legibility. The models were photographed, and the drawings and photographs functioned as models for my sculpture, which was first made in clay to scale. ■

*Promiscuous Intimacies*, 2020. Patinated bronze, 40 x 23.5 x 19.5 in. View of work in progress.

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