

SEANKELLY

Editors. "In the studio with... Shahzia Sikander." *Apollo Magazine*. July 21, 2021.

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE



Photo: K. Y. Cheng/South China Morning Post via Getty Images

After receiving a rigorous training in miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore, Shazia Sikander set out to reinvent the art form for the modern age. The Pakistani-born, New York-based artist unites traditional approaches with contemporary concerns to create an iconography of her own. Her intricately detailed works are often on a large-scale and sometimes painted directly on to walls or on canvases stained with tea. In recent years, she has also experimented with other media, such as media, animation and even performance. 'Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities' is currently at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York (until 26 September); it travels to the RISD Museum later this year.

Where is your studio?

Currently in my apartment, in New York.

What do you like most about the space?

That my library is within immediate reach, that I can multitask when needed, and I don't have to leave the apartment to go to work. It is also walking distance from some of my favourite museums – I usually start my day with a brisk walk and drop in at one of the museums for 15 minutes to see an artwork.

What frustrates you about it?

The intimate scale.

SEANKELLY



Pleasure Pillars (2001), Shahzia Sikander. Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly, New York; © Shahzia Sikander

Do you work alone?

When I'm collaborating with authors, composers and poets I'm working collectively, when I'm researching and drawing it's usually by myself.

How messy is your studio?

I work on the floor: eventually everything ends up there in different formations.

Which artistic tool could you least do without?

The magnifying glass attached to my drawing table, which allows me to paint intensely intricate details.

What's the most well-thumbed book in your studio?

Feminism is for Everybody by bell hooks and Artificial Hells by Claire Bishop.

What's your typical studio lunch?

Bagel and coffee or fruit salad.

What do you listen to while you're working?

Currently Uneasy, an album by Vijay Iyer, Tyshawn Sorey and Linda Oh.

SEANKELLY



Shahzia Sikander at work on her show at the Morgan

Do you ever sleep in your studio?

Absolutely, I love the creative intimacy of carrying on the work through the rituals of dreams.

Is anything (or anyone) banned from your studio?

Negative vibes and gossip.

‘Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities’ is at the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, until 26 September; then at the RISD Museum, Rhode Island, from 12 November–30 January 2022.