

# 1994

## NEWSLINERS

In 1993, when the prestigious new Olympic Museum was inaugurated in Lausanne, Switzerland, sport in Pakistan was represented by a miniature on the theme of polo. The artist: Shazia Sikander. In October 1994, when the exhibition of Pakistani women artists opened at the Bradford City Museum the youngest participant was Shazia Sikander. When the Rhode Island School of Design announced its graduate prize in painting, recently the awardee was again Shazia Sikander.

Shazia is poised to be the Pakistani artist 'most likely to succeed' in the new millennium. Trained at the National College of Arts, Lahore, Shazia graduated with distinction in 1991, winning every award the college had to offer, including the Haji Sharif Medal and the Kipling Prize. Intensively trained in the art of miniature painting, Shazia has succeeded in bridging the divide between a highly stylised discipline loaded with historical baggage, and the contemporary idiom, thereby invigorating the discipline with relevance. She is an intelligent painter who debunks sentimental revivalism and is ready to take on the challenges, contradictions and all, of the 20th century.

Undaunted by the problems of moving from one culture to another, Shazia creates imagery that is both innovative and mysterious. In her recent work she deals with ambivalence which is an intrinsic aspect of a woman's experience – an ambivalence reflected in both Shazia's forms as well as the content of her work. This ambivalence is created, Shazia says, "when you juxtapose the nurturing power of growth with the sharp threat of oppression – the knife woman, the fertility charmer, the exaggerated voluptuousness, the polarities of women, the destructive and the seductive, the vulnerability, the aggressor, the victim, and the desire to please..."

Shazia admits that she walks a tightrope, continually grappling with the challenge of remaining relevant in more than one milieu. But the sharp focus of her commitment and the fecundity of her talent promise to serve her – and art buffs – well. ■

# Art's New Canvas