

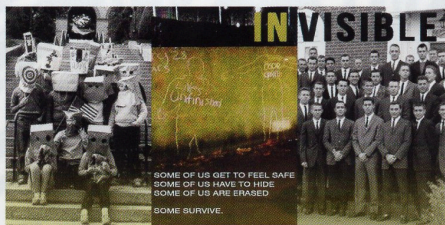


FALL 2015



TUFTS
UNIVERSITY
ART
GALLERY

in this edition



THIS PAST SPRING, 12 TUFTS STUDENTS GATHERED FOR A “FLASH ART COLLECTIVE” WORKSHOP, FACILITATED BY VISITING ARTIST (AND TUFTS-SMFA ALUM) AVRAM FINKELSTEIN. THE GROUP FORMED FROM A CALL FOR PARTICIPATION AFTER THE EMERGENCE OF THE “BLACK LIVES MATTER” MOVEMENT AND WAS INSPIRED TO CONSIDER THE OVERLAY OF RACE AND PRIVILEGE IN U.S. SOCIETY. THEY WORKED WITH ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ON CAMPUS THROUGHOUT THE MID-20TH CENTURY AND ONE PHOTO TAKEN DURING A CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION IN THE FALL OF 2014. A SHORT TEXT PROMPTS QUESTIONS ABOUT “WHO GETS TO FEEL SAFE?”, “WHO HAS TO HIDE?”, AND “WHO IS ERASED?” TITLED *INVISIBLE* (SEE IMAGE ABOVE), THE RESULTING PUBLIC ART “BILLBOARD” (SPONSORED BY THE TUFTS ART GALLERY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE TISCH COLLEGE) IS ON VIEW AT THE CAMPUS CENTER THROUGH APRIL 2016.

Similar themes resonate with *And I Can't Run*, a 2013 screenprint by Hank Willis Thomas recently acquired for Tufts (on view in the Aidekman Arts Center). Thomas' use of reflective roadside vinyl gives the image a different aura depending on the light source. It appears in natural light as a ghost-like trace, the imagery hard to discern. A flashlight or camera flash reveals another image, thus rendering the invisible visible. Learn more about this smart, conceptual photographic print and the important American artist who created it in our *Museum Without Walls* program.

Also in this edition, learn about two different immersive exhibitions on view this fall and a monumental art commission on the Medford campus. Be introduced to acquisitions to our permanent art collection, and to a unique contemporary art destination

in Japan. Read about Frida Kahlo and the collaborative work of a Tufts professor and a former student. Uncover the research of alum Jay Greene (A88), who will visit campus in October to talk about why field trips to museums are crucial yet underrated “experiential learning” opportunities and how the Gallery is partnering with the Tufts Medical and Sackler Schools on our own “field trips” to foster visual literacy.

We invite you to visit us often—for a special event, artist's talk, panel discussion, reception, or Sunday tour with a Gallery Guide; or, bring a friend (or date!) to one of our hands-on createdATE workshops.

Looking ahead to next year, the Shirley and Alex Aidekman Arts Center—the home of the Tufts University Art Gallery—turns 25! I invite you to send us your memories of the 1990 construction or 1991 opening. Or, simply send reflections—as alumni, parents, friends, or neighbors—about your favorite experience, exhibition, or event in the Arts Center, please email:

amy.schlegel@tufts.edu.

Amy Schlegel

AMY INGRID SCHLEGEL, PH.D.
DIRECTOR OF GALLERIES AND COLLECTIONS
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

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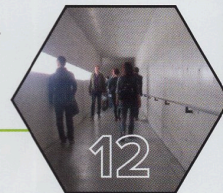
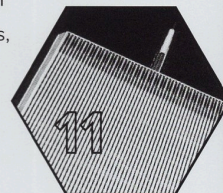
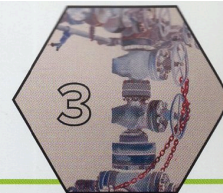
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SEPTEMBER 17, 5 TO 7:30PM

MEET THE ARTIST AT A PUBLIC OPENING RECEPTION

OCTOBER 15, 6-7:30PM

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION AND DIALOGUE WITH SHAHZIA SIKANDER

OCTOBER 15, 7:45PM

CONTEMPORARY ART CIRCLE DINNER WITH SHAHZIA SIKANDER

IMAGE: SHAHZIA SIKANDER, *THE CYPRESS DESPITE ITS FREEDOM*, 2013, DIGITAL C-PRINT

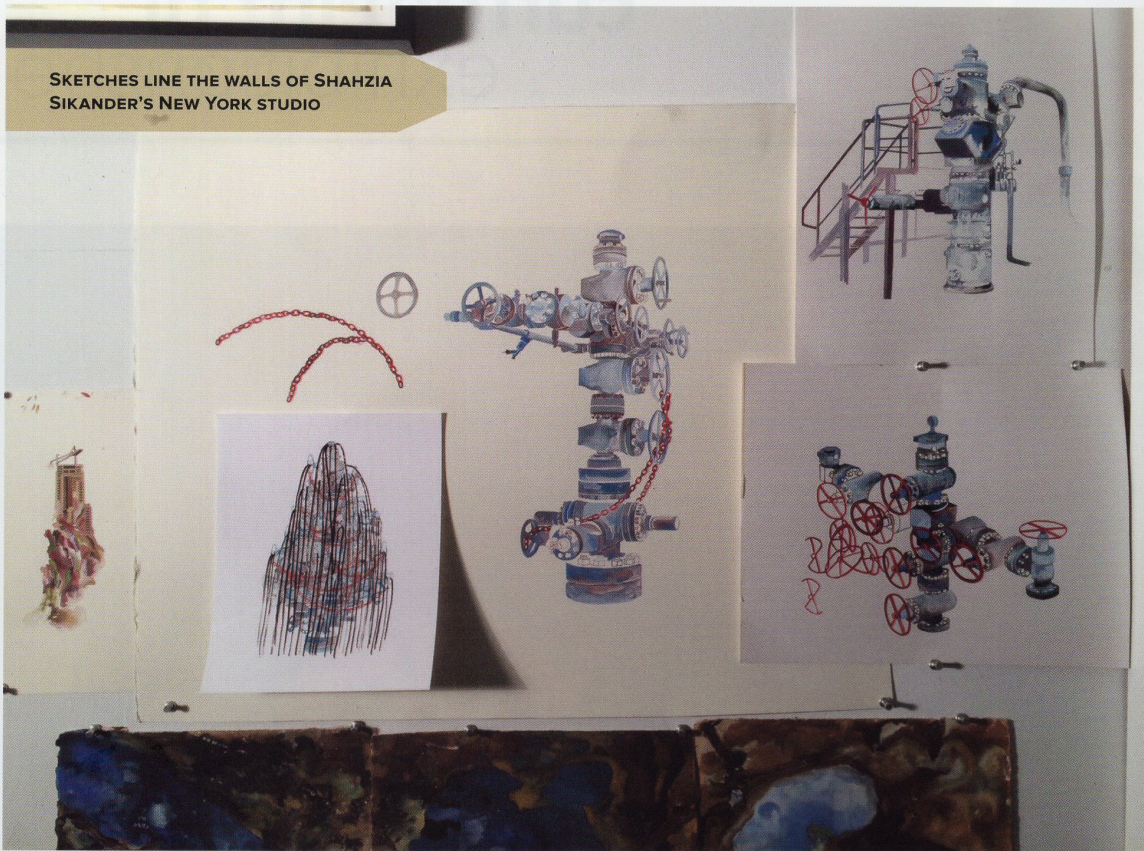


Parallax | Shahzia Sikander

INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED ARTIST SHAHZIA SIKANDER (B. 1969, PAKISTAN, LIVES IN NYC) WAS INVITED BY THE SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TO CREATE A WORK OF ART FOR THE 11TH SHARJAH BIENNALE IN 2013. SIKANDER HAD VISITED THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AS A YOUNG PERSON, DURING THE 1980S, AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITAIN FROM THE GULF REGION IN 1971 AND THE END OF THE BRITISH PROTECTORATE THAT LEAD TO THE CREATION OF THE NATIONS OF THE U.A.E, BAHRAIN, QATAR, AND OMAN. "ENGAGING THE CITY [OF SHARJAH] ... WAS A FAR MORE TACTILE EXPERIENCE," SIKANDER REFLECTED, "ALLOWING ME TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER INTO THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE. IT WAS NOT THE EASIEST OF CULTURES TO ACCESS. IT TOOK TIME TO ESTABLISH SOME SORT OF CHEMISTRY WITH THE PLACE."

Inspired by the U.A.E.'s unique geography and culture at the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, Sikander created an immersive installation, *Parallax*, that is the centerpiece of a major exhibition at Tufts, on view from September 10 through December 6, 2015. Constructed from hundreds of drawings and paintings, with music and sound by composer Du Yun, abstract, representational, and textual forms coexist and jostle for domination in this 15-minute animation. Related paintings, drawings, and photographs are also included in this U.S. museum debut of Sikander's most complex and largest work to date.

Sikander's creative process leading to the monumental work *Parallax*, is explored in a forthcoming publication from Tufts, with contributions from Tufts Professor of History Ayesha Jalal, independent curator and critic Sara Raza, Amy Ingrid Schlegel, Shahzia Sikander and Du Yun. Since its debut in Sharjah, U.A.E, *Parallax* has been presented in



Sweden, Sri Lanka, Korea, Texas, Spain, and now in Boston at Tufts.

Parallax is a profound rumination and reconsideration of the confluence of cultures and histories localized at the Strait of Hormuz, part of present-day U.A.E., and the changing power relations and dynamics that have characterized the Gulf region for centuries. The Gulf region has been called an “unimagined community” bound not by ethnic, tribal, or racial identities but “creolized” like the Caribbean, with an integrated mixture of Arab and Persian cultures. Similar to other Gulf States, 85 percent of the United Arab Emirate’s population of 9.2 million is non-citizen expatriate workers, predominately from South Asia.

Sikander made several research trips to the U.A.E. in 2011 and 2012, during which time she rented a car. She drove across the west coast of the Peninsula (facing the Persian Gulf) and then north along the tip of the Strait of Hormuz, to Ras al-Khaimah and the tip of Diba al-Fujaira. She then drove south through the Kalba, along the coast (on the side of the Gulf of Oman), then across the desert from Sharjah to Khor Fakkan several

times. She said she was interested in condensing her thoughts and narration through drawing during these trips. “I thought of drawing as libretto, and, in addition, driving as drawing. Driving for me was like navigating the terrain of a drawing,” she said in a 2014 interview. “As I drove, I focused on the experience of the senses, the intense heat, the bright light, the proximity to water and sand, and often on the notion of the ‘mirage.’ ... Driving is less about getting to know a place—[and] becomes another type of activity, [operating] as a device to measure the displacement of scale.”



She made an unexpected discovery during one of these trips that proved to be a major catalyst for the creation of the work featured at Tufts during the fall of 2015. A chance meeting of a Pakistani caretaker of a dilapidated movie house in the desert turned into an opportunity to experiment with projecting images on a cinematic scale. "While visiting Sharjah in August 2012, I toured a dilapidated cinema in the town of Khorfakkan. The building is full of character but in a state of decay, dying a slow death. In the United Arab Emirates, where there is so much new development, this stagnating space is an anomaly. I returned to the cinema in December, when I met its sole guard. A native of Pakistan, he came to Sharjah in 1976 to help build the theatre, which was designed by architects and engineers from Karachi after Pakistani cinema architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. He, rising through the ranks from laborer to manager, had lived in the cinema since his arrival. The building is his life, his love—his existence is so intricately intertwined with it, and its imminent death will close a chapter in his life's labour. But he spoke of it as if it were still alive and functional, unable to see the layers of dust and decay around him, a sole survivor held captive to a dream. I ended up weaving this unexpected story into my work."

Sikander made a series of color photographs called "The Cypress, Despite its Freedom, Held Captive by the Garden" that document this encounter, two of which

are included in the Tufts exhibition. In the photographs, the caretaker watches the faded screen as Sikander projects her drawings on it, "transforming the space and bringing the cinema back to life."

Parallax has a mesmerizing effect of dramatic intensity. It opens with a full screen image described as both a pulsating, black sea and as the "white noise" static of an analog television screen. A "curtain" then descends from top to bottom, and a steady sequence of slow movements flow directionally—first from top to bottom, then from right to left (as in Arabic script), then left to right, then in circular patterns. It culminates with imagery introduced in the opening scene, "swarms" that coalesce into what she calls the six "singing spheres," each with its own density spinning at a different rate, each seemingly calibrated to a layer of sound. Its directional, narrative flows impart an effect similar to chanting meditation, disrupted momentarily at different points by fleeting real world sounds of jackhammering or explosions, and the recitation of poetry by both male and female voices. The soundtrack, composed by Du Yun in close collaboration with Sikander, includes recitations in Arabic by three poets living in Sharjah.

—AMY INGRID SCHLEGEL
EXHIBITION CURATOR

Parallax Publication



**LOOK FOR THE PUBLICATION
PARALLAX IN SPRING 2016, WITH
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:
AYESHA JALAL, SARA RAZA,
AMY INGRID SCHLEGEL, AND
SHAHZIA SIKANDER AND DU YUN**

SHAHZIA SIKANDER, *PARALLAX*, 2013
(DETAIL), 3-CHANNEL HD DIGITAL ANIMATION
5.1 SURROUND SOUND
MUSIC, SOUND BY DU YUN