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# artscope

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September/October 2015

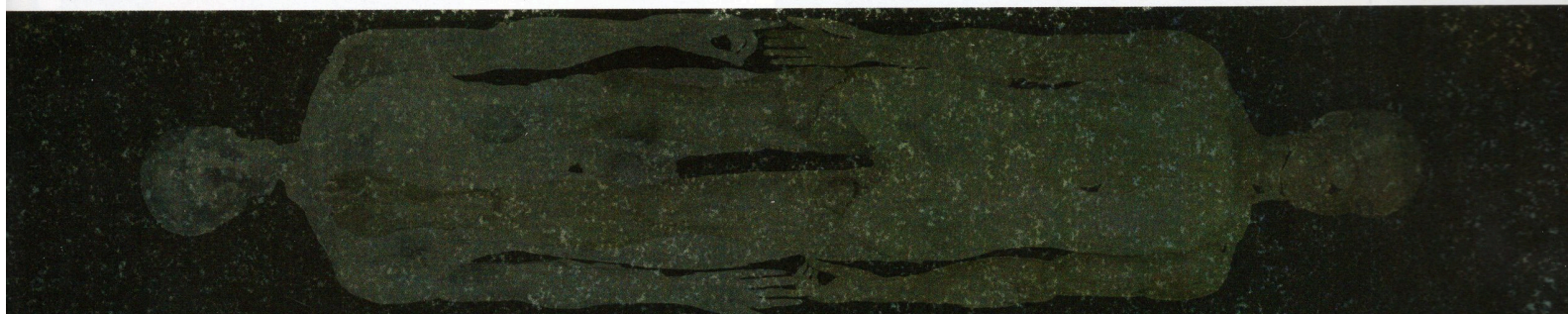
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# PARALLAX

## SIKANDER'S ADVENTURE OF THE MIND

TISCH FAMILY  
GALLERY  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY  
AIDEKMAN ARTS  
CENTER  
40 TALBOT AVENUE  
MEDFORD,  
MASSACHUSETTS  
SEPTEMBER 10  
THROUGH  
DECEMBER 6



Shahzia Sikander savors art as a fundamental, erudite process, a wonderful, exuberant adventure of the mind. It's an academic endeavor that yields a rich array of cultural symbolisms that she culls directly from those distant, exotic places she traveled to worldwide. What she distilled from those locales sparks a vital, cutting-edge conversation between life's essential truths pitted against baffling human conventions, thus delineating a "Parallax," a curious social complexity in life to behold.

Pivotal visual elements within Sikander's drawing, watercolor and painting have been harvested and seeded seamlessly into her latest large-scale, digital-formatted animation-work that's also infused with newly composed sound, music and poetry, producing a mesmerizing mixed-media sensory experience.

Accepting the advantages offered by computer technology, Sikander digitally scans many of her original large, intricate drawings; they are meticulously rendered and fascinating to examine close up. Next, she zooms in digitally to pull out a fraction of an image – not unlike isolating just an eyelash

of the entire body and changing its scale – which then acquires a distinct image-quality wholly separate from the parent-image. In this way, a second-generation of synthesized, moving colors and patterns of splashes, planes, stripes and drips come alive as layered, modulating and vibrant as an Impressionist painting.

These at once abstract and literal iconic images – subjected to digital scaling and mapping, remixed and animated – breathe as if organic; they flow and ebb in metamorphosis, all keenly choreographed on a panoramic screen. The result is a riveting phantasmagoria.

### FOREBODING INTERLUDE

While viewing this twelve-minute-long, looped animation-work in a darkened gallery, exhilarating images and sound unexpectedly unfold into what appears as a foreboding interlude, before transcending into yet another phase. When this impression was conveyed to Sikander, she said, "I am not opposed to melancholy and darkness as elements in art."

Sikander welcomes individual interpretations of what viewers see and feel.

Clearly she does not dictate to the art viewer; rather, her own utopian intuition seeks to promote global intercultural social cohesion.

Sikander was born in Lahore, Pakistan and now lives in New York City where she produces her multidisciplinary art while continuing to travel worldwide for inspiration and to coordinate her countless award-winning exhibitions throughout East Asia, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

*Parallax*, 2013, 3-channel HD digital animation, 5.1 surround sound music, sound by Du Yun.

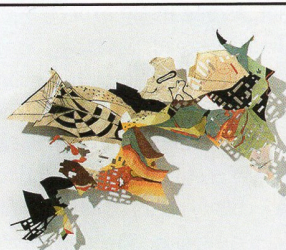


Photo: Stewart Clements

"Lost City of G", 2015

### Wood

Oct. 5 – Dec. 5

A group exhibition of contemporary artists who incorporate wood into their work.

23 Essex Street | Beverly, MA

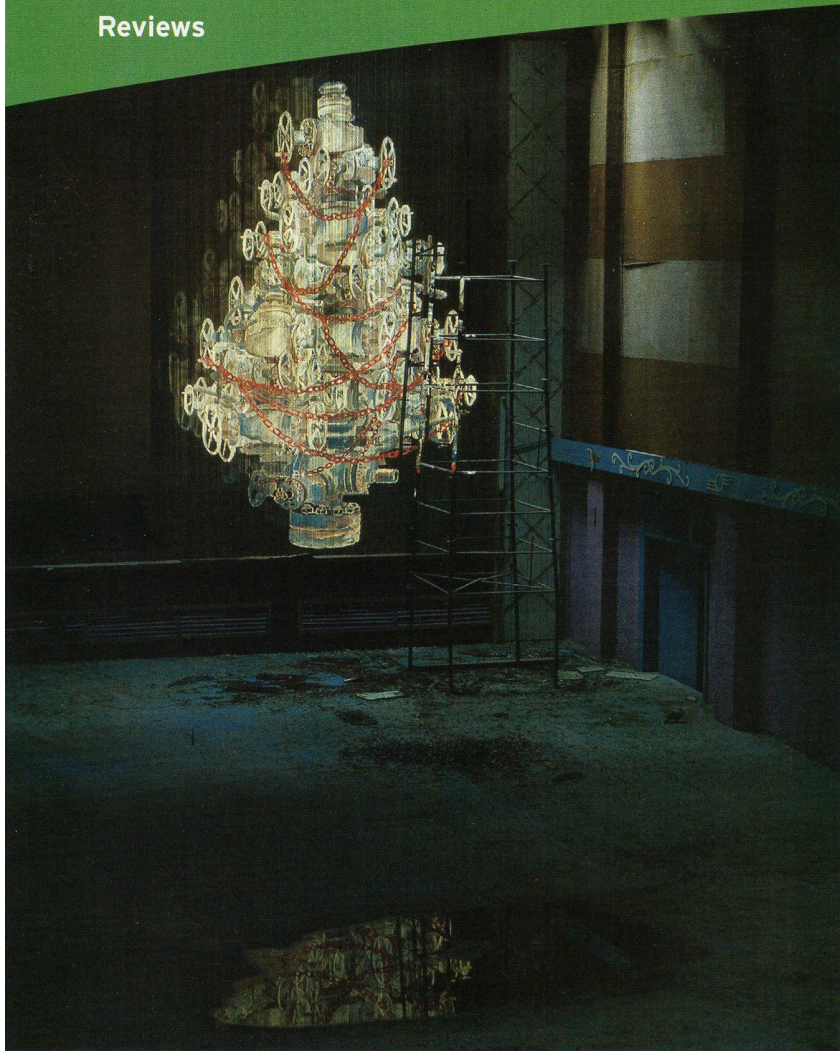
### Heidi Whitman: Lost Cities through Sept. 26

Montserrat College of Art Gallery presents Heidi Whitman's paper constructions, paintings, and drawings are invented terrains or mental maps. Contemporary city grids and maps of ancient ruins are primary references.

Montserrat College  
of Art

montserrat.edu/galleries





*The Cypress Despite its Freedom Is Held Captive to the Garden*, 2013, color photograph (image courtesy of the artist).

International cultural differences serve as the wellspring for profound ideas brimming in Sikander's unique artwork. She sees her work as a continuum; bits and pieces from previous works will be revitalized in newer works.

In "Spinn," her 2003 drawing and animation-work, the iconic images she isolated from faraway locales are not, as one might expect, familiar religious figures like the Hindu deity "Krishna"; instead, Sikander chose the highly stylized hairdo of a "Gopi" woman, a cowherd-devotee to Krishna. Bypassing that cows are a symbol of love and devotion, and deleting the Gopi's face while lifting only her distinctive hairdo, Sikander rendered this Gopi-hair motif into an abstract form; at different scales, rotated on axis, and multiplied, the detached hairdos in motion look like a colony of ants swarming or bats darting in flight at a monstrous scale. They could even take on the shape of a Romulan Space Craft as featured in *Star Trek* movies.

In "Parallax," Sikander has demonstrated that somewhere between chance and mystery lies imagination that is timeless and infinite. Amy Ingrid Schlegel, director of galleries and collections of Tufts University, has curated another superb, intellectually stimulating exhibition that is not to be missed.

| Franklin W. Liu



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