

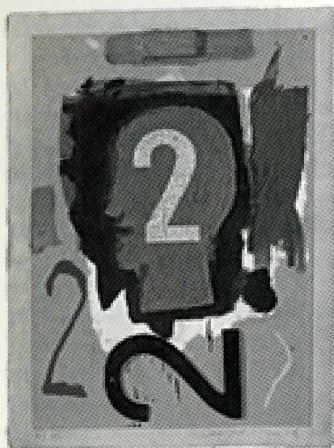
# **ARTSCENE™**

**The Monthly Digest to Art in Southern California**



**ROBERT MOTHERWELL  
"GERMAN LINE #1"**

**MIMMO PALADINO • BARBARA HASHIMOTO • SHAHZIA  
SKANDER • JIM MORPHEUS • MARNIA WEBER • EUGENE  
BERMAN • "DIVERSE CITY" • AND MUCH MORE**



Mimmo Paladino, "California Suite No. 3," 2004, Mixografia® print on handmade paper, edition of 50 c 31 x 23 x 1".

early 1970's to challenge the Mexican modernist Rufino Tamayo to try his hand at prints. Remba recalls Tamayo saying that if he could create prints with *bulto* (roughly translated as "textured mass") he would give the process a try. Tamayo succeeded beautifully, and Remba went on to produce Mixografia prints for a Who's-Who list of modern and contemporary art stars, including Henry Moore, Helen Frankenthaler, Joe Goode, Lynda Benglis, Robert Graham, and numerous others.

Now Italian postmodernist Mimmo Paladino has whipped up a series of elegant Mixografias which, like Tamayo's, bubble with earthy sensuality and spiritual poetry. Paladino's protean creativity has expressed itself in a wide range of media, including sculpture in many materials, painting, printmaking, drawing and assemblage. His new Mixografia prints' supple plasticity and capacity to meld disparate materials into a unified field obviously complement Paladino's skills, interests and talents. As this show (which will be simultaneously exhibited in Rome, Italy at the Istituto Italo-Latina Americano) clearly demonstrates, Paladino literally stamps many of his signature icons into these prints.

For example, several display his familiar sketches of silhouetted heads, disembodied hands and body limbs, obsessively scribbled numbers, and an array of historical symbols and signs that point to classical antiquity. Mix in cubist inspired geometric drawings and the assemblagist's scraps of

common "junk," and what one sees in these works is a kind of postmodernist geology, with layers of art-history fully exposed like stratified cultural sediment.

Paladino calls this collection of work "California Suite," then numbers, rather than names each print. In one ("No. 3"), a cadaverous head inked in an earthy, clay-like brown becomes a vessel for a large number 2 drawn with graffiti-like innocence. However, the randomness of this union gives way to quirky reason, because the shape of the number visibly echoes or rhymes with the skull's curved perimeter. More painted 2's and a few expressionist brush strokes of bold color rotate around this cranium like the hands of a mystical clock, while globular drips of ink, frozen deep within the print's embossed paper, engage in an ironic nod to Modernism's concern with the illusion of dynamic motion.

In "No. 10," Paul Klee-like drawings of cheveroned twigs etched into a pink color field act as spiritual arrows pointing in erratic directions. This frames another head, which this time houses a hand with fingers stretched wide open. These images float above an image of an embossed chunk of charred wood, as if some archetypal soul were reaching down from the transforming caldron of a dream into a primordial forest.

This show takes its viewers places, and though it's not clear exactly where, the confidence and control these Mixografia prints exude feel like safe invitations to join them along their allegorical journeys.

Andy Brumer

## SHAHZIA SIKANDER

(Otis College, Ben Maltz Gallery, West Side) Shahzia Sikander (and by extension her work) is complexly situated. She is highly successful by Western art establishment standards, she is Muslim by background, Pakistani-born in this season of shock and awe gone grotesque; she is unveiled, jean clad,



Shahzia Sikander, "Land-Escapes, Series 3, #7", 2003.

ultra hip; she is theoretically poised to deconstruct post colonial clichés, yet endemically subject to them (reviews of her work in publications as august as the *New York Times* casually mix up Shiva and Buddha in a kind of "they all look the same to me" faux pas).

Sikander studied classical painting in Pakistan, came West and hit the art world running straight out of Rhode Island School of Design in the mid '90s. Her work became a popular, stunning analogue for slippery categories at the heart of transnational practice, theory and experience--all of which query essentialist notions of race/nation as some intrinsic phenomenological condition.

In this vein, Sikander's works of the last decade mix an oft ironic sampling of Western classicism with delicate 17th-century Mughal precision, and folksy and sensual Rajput variations. She is wont to commingle Eastern religion with Homeric clichés, broad abstract shapes found in the backgrounds and borders of miniatures with infinitely delicate natural description. She's fond of treating a wall as a framed object, then letting her imagery dribble around a random corner so as to remind us of the fluid boundaries between pictorial and real space. The work can toss in the short-hand, chunky style of cartoon animation (a style also found in the more abstract art of the ancient Jain), and in fact, Sikander turns paintings into magical animated shorts.

A banner Sikander created for New York's Museum of Modern Art was a stunning if predictable yoking of a stylized Hindu goddess towering above a Bronzino Venus sampled from a painting in which Cupid incestuously fondles his Mother's erect nipple. Both images were so tweaked by Sikander's humor, by her inquiry into her own

identity, and so coded by their prior existence in the history of ideas, that nationalistic points of origin exploded in a ricochet of references too dense to pinpoint.

The current show is called "Dissonance to Detour." Here's a partial list of some of the "Dissonances" that Sikander coaxes and intermingles as deftly as she bleeds inked pigments into voluptuous trees, rolling hills, and foliage: Intimate miniaturist precision/hefty wall scaled works; Moslem aniconic traditions/Persian and Western addictions to worldly observation; Hindu transcendence through the senses/Islamic proscriptions against the flesh; canvas as surface/whole gallery as pictorial space; invoking of ancient traditions/invoking of post modernism's credo that the only good tradition is one whose tautological status has been fully unpeeled.

Here is the "Detour," the turn into a new culvert: Sikander, to her credit, has begun to resist the temptation to paint what we expect of her (an anti-patriarchal strategy in and of itself). We want to see the lush sensual layers of painted paper with which she has filled many a prestigious viewing space; we want to keep asking her about the veil (get over it, she says with these images); we want the gorgeous, exotic line, the menageries and careful open-ended exoticisms she has been showing and carefully constructing as markers of hybrid identities. As transnationalism becomes more buzz than critique, she extends the inquiry into less charted territory.

In Indian miniatures there was always a backdrop of highly abstracted nature--lollipop trees, flattened, rolling hills in the lushest of natural pigments. These stood in for "setting," "sense of place," "position in time and geography." These were the backdrops for processions, hunts, mythological trysts, the turn of creation's wheel, all if it. These magical backdrops are now fore-fronted as subjects in large, excellent paintings. They are intoned with inky, amorphous fields of hue, transparent and vaporous as perfumed air in one passage, and then tooled to so crisp a line in another that tree

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- Raid Projects Gallery 55,59  
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- TAG, The Artists' Gallery 41,51  
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- UCLA/Fowler Museum of Cultural History 42,52  
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- Ventura College Art Galleries 80,82  
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- Xiem Clay Center & Gallery 62,65  
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**Sikander**, continued from page 23. . . .

bark looks like worms scurrying over the surface. Sikander's mastery with line becomes in these works a tendrilly filigree snaking throughout the land, water, air, and docile fauna--an energy made evident by the artist's hand. Lest we wax too romantic and exotic, set the clock back on tired notions of the "Orient," please know that these very same hills, trees and mountains seem to possess an equal amount of that goofy life force that animates the inanimate in old-school cartoons, where roads rise to meet feet and all of nature vibrates amiably.

Here you have a sense of place that is just the opposite of what we mean by exile, diaspora, and dislocation. These landscapes are at once, sensual and contemplative, Eastern and Western, both Kantian and Hindu evocations of the innocent sublime. They create a sense of place and geography not as "site of difference," but as human mooring.

Foucault talked about experiences that by virtue of their just plain strangeness disrupt the order of things. . . that is the case with these lush, pneumatic, multivalent geographies.

Marlena Donohue