

ENTERTAINMENT ART &amp; DESIGN

## So contemporary it's temporary

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By Louise Schwartzkoff

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TO PAINT a three-metre-high mural on the entrance wall at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, the New York artist Shahzia Sikander is clambering on scaffolding and painting from scissor lifts to reach the highest corners.

The work will take three weeks to complete, but will remain on the wall for less than two months. When Sikander's first Australian exhibition closes in February, the MCA will paint over her delicate shapes and swirling lines.

"That's just part and parcel of the work I do," she said. "It's quite ephemeral and it has a temporary relationship to the location."

Since she moved from Pakistan to New York 16 years ago, Sikander has won international acclaim for her intricate works, which blend historic Indo-Persian painting techniques with references to popular culture. Last year she was awarded one of the MacArthur Foundation's \$US500,000 (\$570,000) "genius" grants, which recognise people who show exceptional creativity in their fields.

She had her mural for the MCA planned, but when she arrived in Sydney this month, she was so taken with the flying foxes in the Botanic Gardens she incorporated them in the work. "I started taking photos of the flying foxes, during the day and at night, and their shapes and movements seemed almost as if they came right out of my work ... you always have to make changes to a work when you adjust it to its location," she said.

**The exhibition opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art tomorrow.**

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