

SHAHZIA SIKANDER
SELECTS

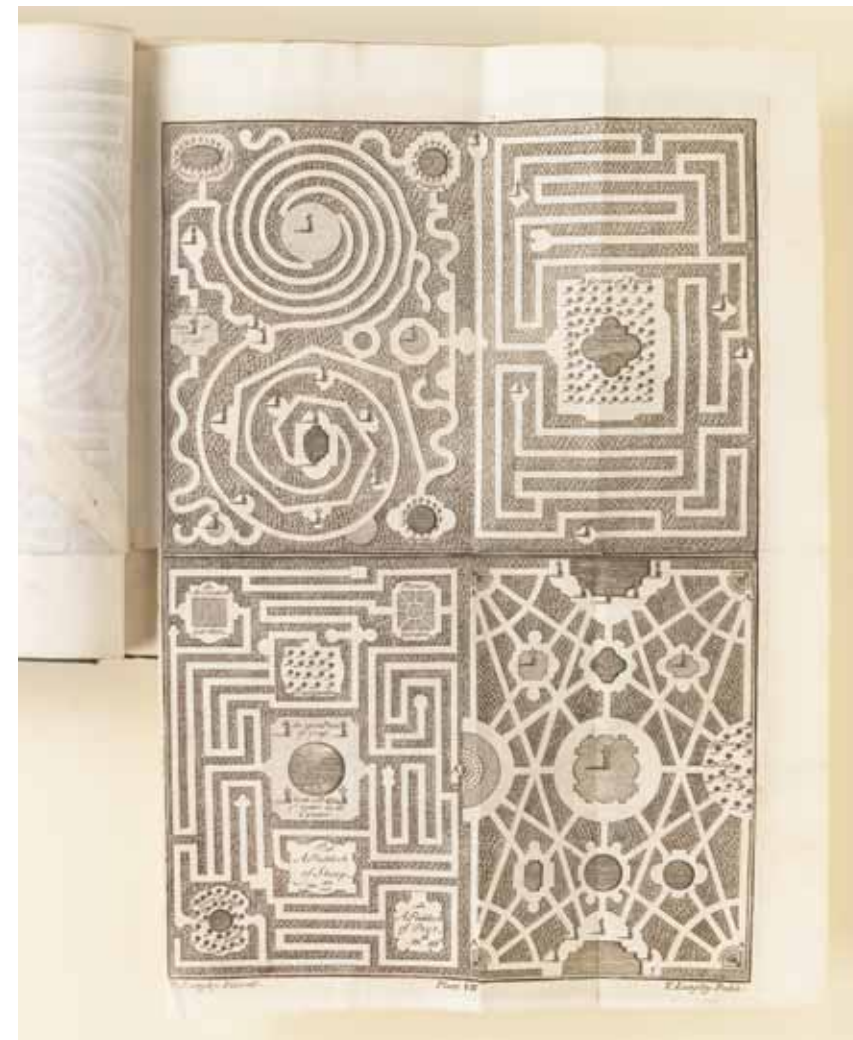
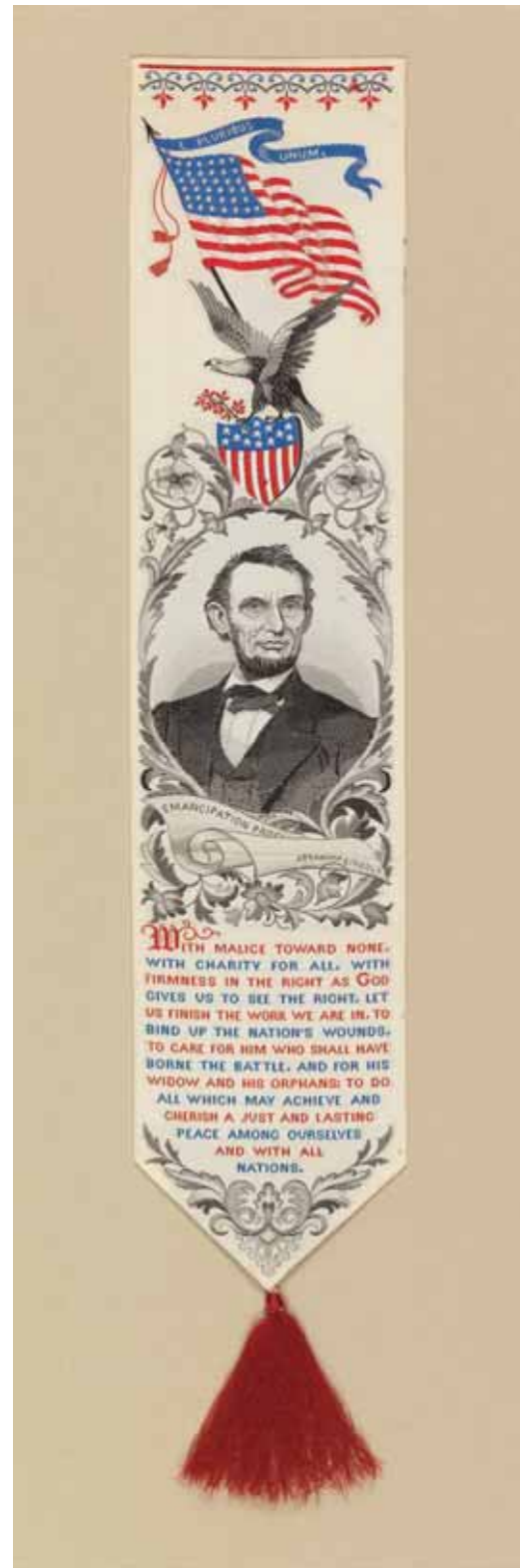
Works from the
Permanent Collection

March 6–September 7, 2009

Cooper-Hewitt
National Design Museum

Shahzia Sikander Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection, curated by the Pakistani-born artist Shahzia Sikander, is the ninth installation in the Nancy and Edwin Marks Gallery exhibition series devoted to showcasing Cooper-Hewitt's permanent collection.

Sikander is an internationally recognized artist whose work embraces the traditions of Indo-Persian miniature painting while integrating vivid images of contemporary life. Her paintings, which vary from intimate watercolors to murals, culminate in rich, precise compositions that invite closer scrutiny and exploration. For this exhibition, Sikander used a group of miniature paintings from the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery as a lens to select objects from Cooper-Hewitt's own collection of wallcoverings, textiles, product design and decorative arts, and drawings, prints, and graphic design, plus books from the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. Sikander's *Provenance, the Invisible Hand*, made especially for the installation, is the resulting hybrid of these two collections, bringing together centuries of images and patterns that defy time and place.



Provenance: The Invisible Hand

Shahzia Sikander

Selecting works from two very different collections—Cooper-Hewitt's; and the Vever Collection, an important assemblage of the Islamic arts of the book from the eleventh through the nineteenth centuries, housed at the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery—for this exhibition was an exercise in reflection and discovery. It is important to note how the individual tastes and interests of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century connoisseur-collectors brought both collections into being and helped frame our understanding of the works. In the case of the Indian and Persian miniature paintings, they were often dislocated from their sources and historical contexts. Time thus emerges as the nemesis to authority. With time, the context shifts. Portraiture can become caricature and satire can lose its humor, as seen in George Augustus Sala's

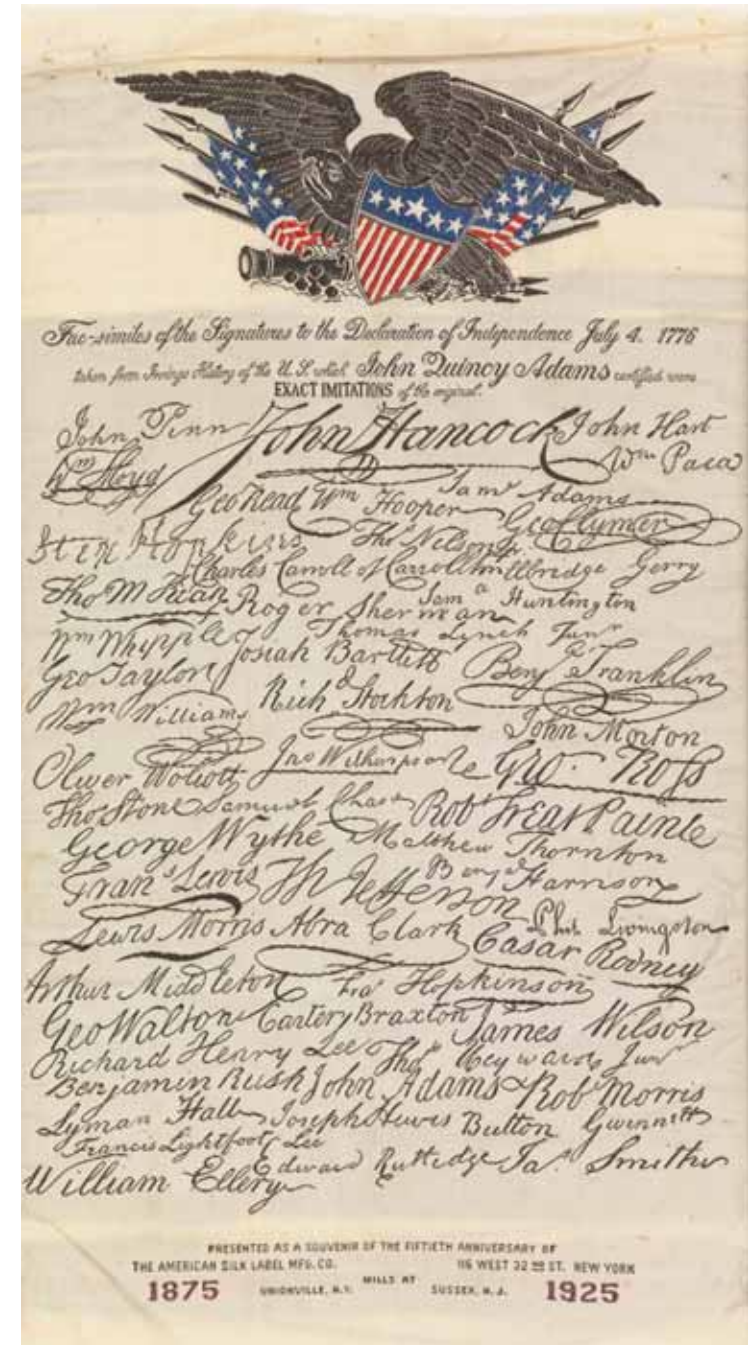


panorama *The Great Exhibition:*
 "Wot is to be."

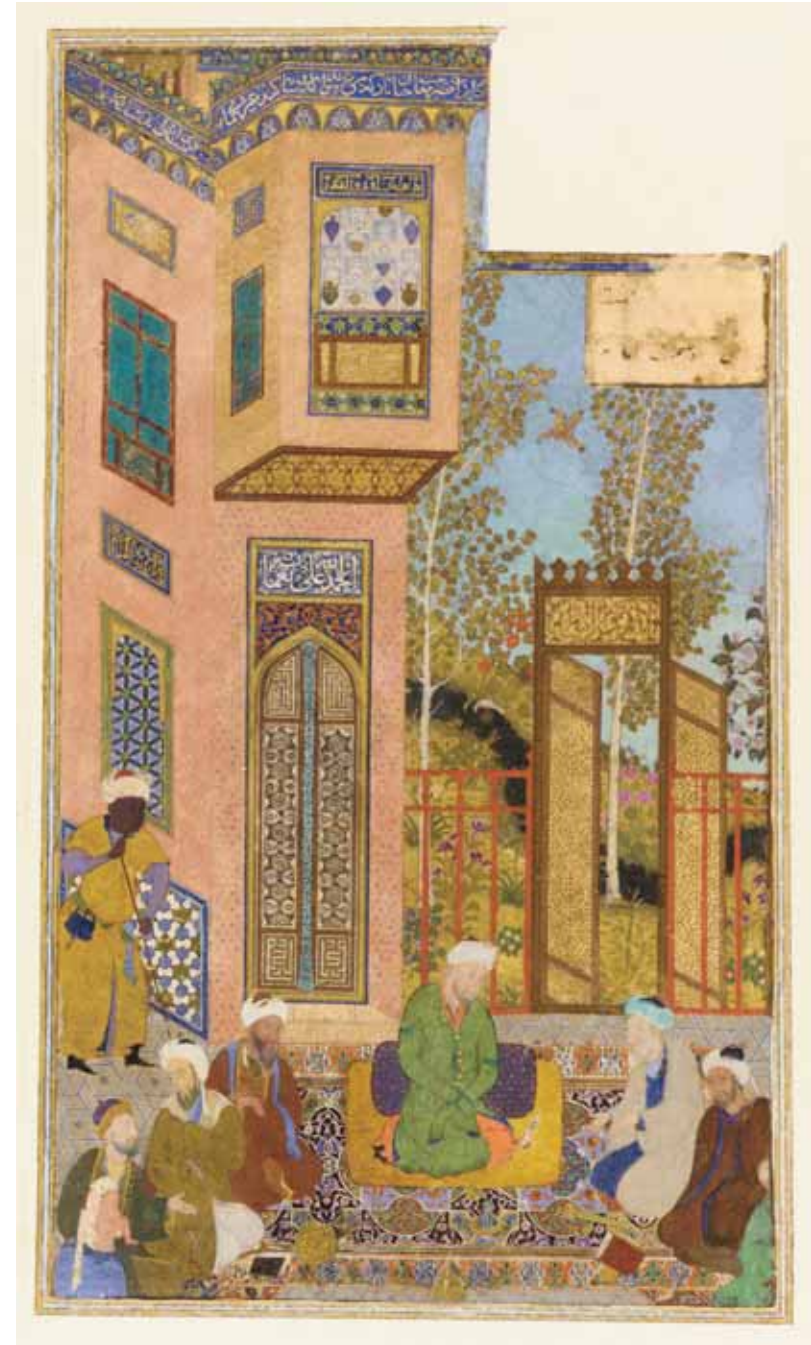
The juxtapositions between the disparate objects I have chosen are not meant to highlight any overt connections, but to keep the viewing process open-ended. Authenticity,

identification, and replication are other aspects that come to mind while engaging the works in this exhibition. Boundaries are often blurred within the works themselves. The Jacquard-woven signatures from the Declaration of Independence

and the *shikasta* calligraphy are connected by the importance of the written word and its extension into design. Ilonka Karasz's use of space as a tool to create links in her scenic panel sheds light on the eloquent structuring in Asamaro Inokuma's Kyoto scroll. Sayyid Ahmad's complex, super-dense geometric and arabesque patterns represent a distortion parallel to Goya's print series, where the human and the mechanical, the grotesque, absurd, and comical come together as a device for satire. My selections are not meant to confine, but to leave space for anticipation and reinterpretation. It is often the missed detail that can launch or renew a tired or trained relationship, whether between the object and the viewer or among the works themselves.









(Cover) *Donde hay ganas hay maña* (*Where There's a Will There's a Way*)/*Modo de volar* (*A Way of Flying*) (detail), plate 13 of *Los Proverbios*. Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes. Spain, 1816–23, published after 1864. Etching, aquatint, drypoint on white wove paper. Gift of Mrs. A. W. Erickson, 1951-174-3. (Page 2) Commemorative ribbon bookmark with portrait of President Abraham Lincoln. Manufactured by Warner Company, Patterson, NJ, ca. 1920. Jacquard-woven silk. Gift of Mrs. S. W. Fairchild from the collection of Louis Harmuth, 1941-114-1-a. (Page 3) *New Principles of Gardening, or, the Laying Out and Planting Parterres, Groves, Wildernesses, Labyrinths, Avenues, Parks, &c.* Batty Langley. London, England, 1728. Paper, fabric-covered board, marble paper. Smithsonian Institution Libraries, SB97 .L28 1728 CHMRB. *Serenade* (panel 1 of 2). Ilonka Karasz. Manufactured by Katzenbach and Warren, Inc. New York, NY, 1948–50. Blue print process on paper. Gift of Katzenbach and Warren, Inc., 1951-2-2. (Page 4) *Provenance, the Invisible Hand*. Shahzia Sikander. New York, NY, 2009. Gouache hand painting, gold leaf, silkscreened pigment on Waterford Saunders Hot Press 410 gram paper. Lent by Shahzia Sikander, 17.2008.1. (Page 5) *Facsimiles of the Signatures to the Declaration of Independence*. Manufactured by American Silk Label Manufacturing Company. New Jersey and New York, 1925. Jacquard-woven silk. Gift of Milton Sunday, 1988-12-1. (Pages 6–8) *The great exhibition: "Wot is to be"...* George Augustus Sala. Published by the Committee of the Society for Keeping Things in Their Places. London, England, 1850. Paper, fabric-covered board. Smithsonian Institution Libraries, DA558 .S35 1850. (Page 9) *The Birth of a Prince*. Attributed to Kamal-uddin Bizhad. Herat, Afghanistan, ca. 1485. Opaque watercolor, ink, gold on paper. Lent by the Art and History Collection, courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: LTS1995.2.29. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. (Page 10) *Donde hay ganas hay maña/Modo de volar*. Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes. (Page 11) *Provenance, the Invisible Hand* (detail). Shahzia Sikander. Unless otherwise noted, all photos: Matt Flynn, © Smithsonian Institution.

THE NANCY AND EDWIN MARKS GALLERY

A series of installations devoted to the permanent collection

Treasures from the Collection

Curated by Paul Warwick Thompson

October 16, 2003–May 2, 2004

Kurt Andersen Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection

June 4, 2004–January 30, 2005

Hella Jongerius Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection

March 4–September 4, 2005

Yinka Shonibare Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection

October 7, 2005–September 24, 2006

Made to Scale: Staircase Masterpieces

The Eugene & Clare Thaw Gift

October 13, 2006–September 16, 2007

IDEO Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection

June 22, 2007–January 20, 2008

Campana Brothers Select: Works from the Permanent Collection

February 15–August 24, 2008

Curators Select: Recent Acquisitions, 2003–2008

September 12, 2008–March 1, 2009

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