



SHAHZIA  
SIKANDER

HAVAH...  
TO BREATHE, AIR, LIFE

**Shahzia Sikander**

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*Havah ... to breathe, air, life*

**Madison Square Park Conservancy 2023**  
**Public Art of the University of Houston System**  
Shahzia Sikander  
*Havah ... to breathe, air, life*

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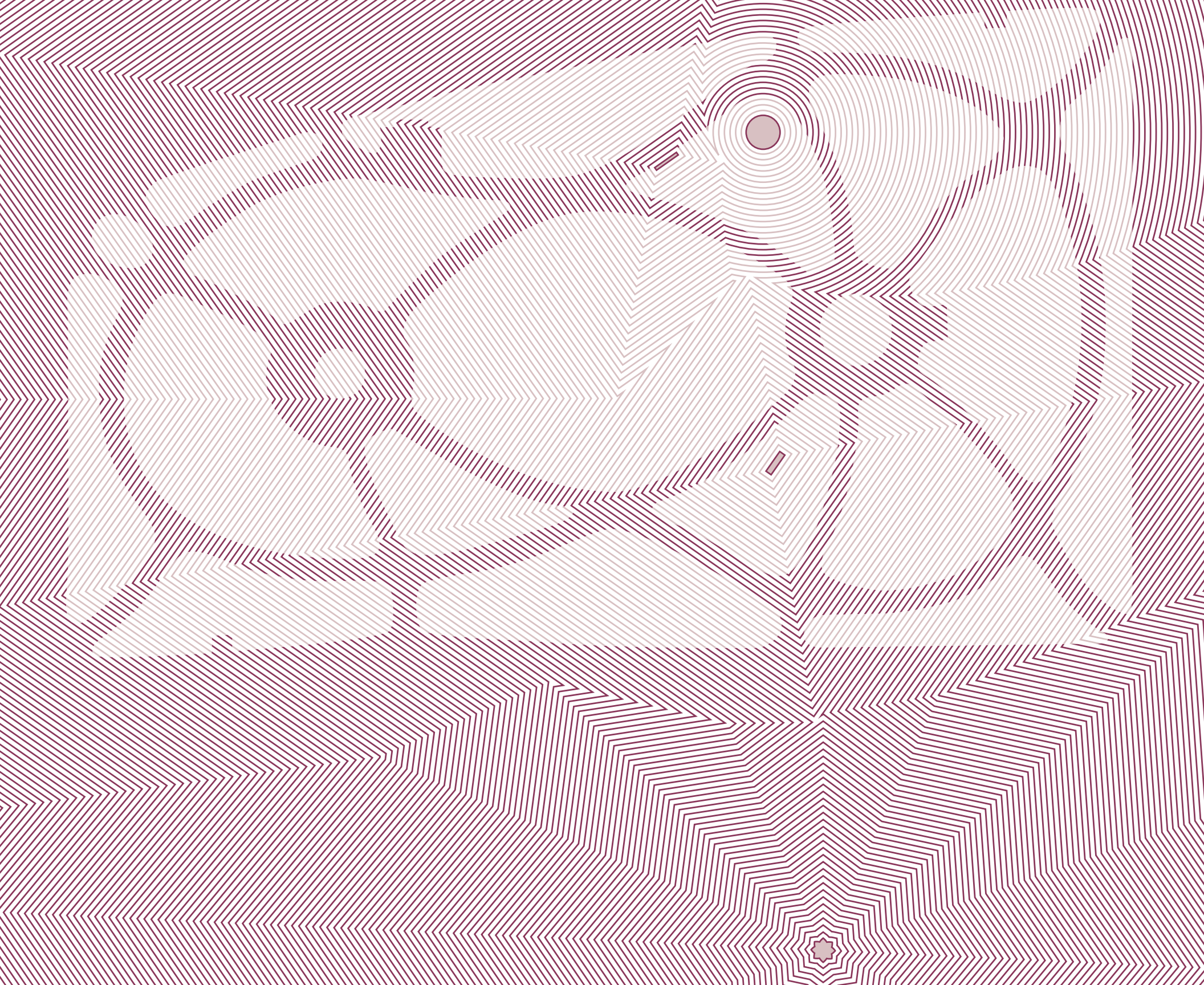
**Commissioned by**  
Madison Square Park Conservancy and  
Public Art of the University of Houston System



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## Introduction

Brooke Kamin Rapaport

Shahzia Sikander's *Havah... to breathe, air, life* is a multi-media outdoor exhibition created for Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York that will travel to Houston as a co-commission with Public Art of the University of Houston System. The project consists of two golden luminous female figures, the eighteen-foot-high *Witness* (2023) and the eight-foot-high *NOW* (2023); a 4-minute, 17-second video animation titled *Reckoning* (2020); and *Apparition* (2023), an augmented reality (AR) experience captured via Snapchat on the phones of parkgoers. When Sikander (American-Pakistan, b. 1969) initially considered *Havah...* she consciously summoned certain key sources and symbols that inspired her vision. The artist first looked deep within the well of her own work, to paintings on paper like *Pleasure Pillars* (2001) that married the Indo-Persian miniature tradition with images of contemporary and historical female figures; and like *Maligned Monsters* (2001), with its dualities and fluidities of the female body; to video projections like the *Unseen* series (2011–2012) shown at the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art at the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design in Honolulu; and to mosaics such as the monumental *Ecstasy as Sublime, Heart as Vector* (2016), a commission for Princeton University's Julis Romo Rabinowitz Building and Louis A. Simpson International Building.

Sikander looks across traditions and cultures for sustenance. She has studied Efik headdresses and masks from Nigeria, which are worn and danced for ceremonial occasions and whose swirling, outside, braided, or twisted horns are evoked in her works. Scholars of Sikander's work have pointed to art and decorative traditions from the seventeenth-century royal courts of Rajputana, India; Tantric art from as early as the first century CE; and early Celtic art beginning with prehistorical objects.<sup>1</sup> Sikander studied miniature painting as an undergraduate at the National College of Arts in Lahore, where she received a BFA in 1991. When she moved to the United States to pursue an MFA at Rhode Island School of Design, she was asked by a





FIG. 3

professor on her first day of classes in 1993: “Are you here to make East meet West?” The comment surprised and unnerved the artist, who found the categorization to be unsubtle racial derision. “No one else was asked such a question,” Sikander recalled in an interview. “The pendulum swung between stereotypes and invisibility. One became aware very quickly that America was fundamentally about a black-and-white relationship, where being brown was not yet fully visible. . . . This struggle with definitions was indeed my experience of that period.”<sup>2</sup>

Since that time, Sikander has deliberately arrived at a unique visual language for her work, and for *Havah . . .*, her first major public art project. Her sculptures have braided

hair in the shape of rams’ horns to project strength in the form of valor. The figures’ twisting tree roots as arms and lower legs are metaphorical for an artist who left Pakistan for the United States when she was twenty-two years old, carrying her roots with her from one continent to another. That imagery is similarly the chronic condition of women who, across their lives in many circumstances, must rely on deep-rooted interiority for support, for agency. The lotus that cradles *NOW* on the rooftop of the courthouse of the Appellate Division, First Department of the Supreme Court of the State of New York is an attribute of wisdom in Buddhism. The hoopskirt in *Witness* recalls the longitudinal and latitudinal lines of the globe, affirming that the monumental figure presides over earthly matters. Sikander found the linearity for that skirt in the courthouse’s circa-1900 stained-glass ceiling dome with its radiating panels of lead lines by Maitland Armstrong (American, 1836–1918). The decorative jabot, evoking the judicial collar worn by Supreme Court associate justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, appears on the figures as a triumphant breastplate.

The sites—a 6.2-acre public park teeming with 50,000 daily visitors and the historic Beaux-Arts courthouse by architect James Brown Lord (1859–1902)—were also significant for the artist. She had long engaged issues of women and justice, and now a civic space and a judicial space offer a demanding context to show her art to new communities, some of whom are steeped in her work and contemporary art, others for whom this project provides an introduction. In Western traditions, justice has often been rendered as a blindfolded female figure. Her sight is disabled, her vision is eclipsed, her ability to render opinion hobbled. Sikander’s figures look determinedly forward. They are open-eyed and clear-sighted.

A curator of a public art exhibition might collaborate with an artist, researching histories, crafting ideas, dispatching language through signage and a press release, designing key messaging on an institutional website, posting on social media—all in service of interpretation and intended meaning. But ultimately it is the work of art itself that people rely on for inspiration and comprehension. This can happen on-site, in real life, when individuals and groups are physically moved by a work. It occurs on social media when people scroll through and vigorously comment on



FIG. 4

posted images. And it can spread similarly when articles and images in major publications reach their audiences.

Dan Bilefsky's feature "Move Over Moses and Zoroaster, Manhattan Has a New Female Lawgiver" ran on the *New York Times* website on January 25, 2023, one week after *Havah* . . . opened in Madison Square Park; it was in the print edition the next day with the headline "To Expand Justice, Revamp the Lineup."<sup>3</sup> Comments erupted across the political and social spectrum. Bilefsky's story led with a nod to publicness, how people on the street were captivated by Sikander's striking work, and then: "Standing atop the grandiose state courthouse is a shimmering, golden eight-foot female sculpture emerging from a pink lotus flower and wearing Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's signature lace collar." Some media outlets pounced; the Twittersphere surged. Sikander was told to return to Pakistan in language timed to national anti-immigrant sentiment. Cable news fixtures who shape American conservatism labeled the artist's allegorical figures as demonic. The sculpture, taking a stand on an empty plinth in the lineup as the first female figure on the courthouse rooftop, with Moses, Justinian, Confucius, Solon, and five other historic male lawgivers, was meant as an anti-monument. The intention of the justices at the courthouse who welcomed Sikander's project was to

open access and to update the antique and antiquated visual program, most noticeable in the rooftop display of sculpture by artists including George Edwin Bissell (1839–1920), Karl Bitter (1867–1915), and Daniel Chester French (1850–1931), and the mural cycle on themes of law in the central courtroom by a group of painters including Edwin Blashfield (1848–1926) and Edward Simmons (1852–1936). Her intentions to create sculpture was commensurate with her work as a member of the 2017 Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers. Once the artist visited the courthouse, her goal was to realize a figure that was visually aligned in scale but was conceptually distinguished from the robed male figures on that rooftop.

The easternmost plinth became vacant when the figures shifted westward after the statue of Muhammad, by Mexican American sculptor Charles Albert Lopez (1869–1906), was removed from the corner plinth in 1955 at the request of the governments of Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan. This was compelling to Sikander. As she noted in a public program on February 6, 2023, she did not cancel Muhammad by installing her work there.<sup>4</sup> Rather, the vacant space signaled a site to physically and symbolically raise issues around women and justice. In her artist statement on *Havah* . . . , Sikander wrote: "I have always had an affinity for the anti-monument in my practice. My work engages the past without glorifying it, and doesn't lay claim to grandiosity. It is often ephemeral. There are works on paper, murals, installations, and animations, which rarely get seen through the lens of the anti-monument."<sup>5</sup> Sikander's is not a named figure, and represents neither an individual nor the rule of law from a specific tradition.

Many commentators carefully analyzed Sikander's work. Rhea Nayyar in *Hyperallergic* wrote of Sikander's practice as "encapsulat[ing] the essence of Indo-Persian miniature works through a feminist lens."<sup>6</sup> In *The Brooklyn Rail*, critic Lilly Wei described the project in the context of monuments: "It might also be hailed as a new kind of monument: life-embracing, inclusionary, dedicated to more compassionate, humane values."<sup>7</sup> In the February 6, 2023, issue of *The New Yorker*, Sikander's *NOW* was shown in the opening pages of the magazine: "Madison Square Park hosts the acclaimed Pakistani American artist Shahzia Sikander's first public art project, 'Havah . . . to breathe, air,



life,' a striking pair of female figures on view through June 4."<sup>8</sup>

Interpretations of Sikander's sculpture in Madison Square Park, her figure on the courthouse rooftop, the video animation, and the AR lens continue to evolve as people witness the project and bring independent opinion to the dialogue. If the role of public art is to inspire and challenge through exceptional work, to welcome a vast range of viewpoints, to guide or affirm perspectives, then Sikander's *Havah*... has attained these values and proclaimed the role of art in civic society.

*Havah... to breathe, air, life* has been complemented by free public programs. "Lifting Women and Justice," an inspiring conversation between Sikander and Becca Heller, Executive Director, International Refugee Assistance Project, moderated by retired Associate Justice Judith Gische, was held on February 6 at Sony Square.

On-site in the park, a series of evening Art Talks in April and May will include artists and cultural leaders—critic and writer Aruna D'Souza, poet Eileen Myles, and writer and curator Laura Raicovich—discussing the significance of *Havah*... Madison Square Park Conservancy's annual symposium, *Transforming Public Art*, to be held on June 2, will feature Sikander in conversation with Tom Finkelppearl, former commissioner of the city's Department of Cultural Affairs. The symposium is supported through the ongoing generosity of The Henry Luce Foundation. We are grateful to Dr. Mariko Silver, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Dr. Terry Carbone, Program Director for American Art.

Thank you to Shannon Ryan and Haani Jetha at the Sikander studio, and to Janine Cirincione and Sean Kelly at Sean Kelly. We are grateful for the close collaboration among the artist, key fabricators, and Madison Square Park Conservancy. At UAP, Dan Tobin, Emily Johnson, and Betsy Jacobson shared their expertise to bring the artist's initial drawn proposal to life in three dimensions. Stephen Miotto of Miotto Mosaic Art Studios carefully rendered the detailed swath of brilliant color across Sikander's *Witness*. Kurt Wulfmeyer at KC Fabrications is a trusted colleague who worked intensely on this project. We thank Orlando Sanchez for his painting finesse and Mariano Brothers for their careful attention to installation needs.

Our thanks to those at Snapchat, including Kimberlee Archer, Alix Forstenzer, and Brianna Laborde, and to Alex Bradt and Emma Waters at MousePack AR studio for their dedicated teamwork on *Apparition*. We are also grateful to Patrick O'Rourke, who guided and advised on the AR experience from its inception to its completion.

Like all of Madison Square Park Conservancy's exhibitions, *Havah*... could not have been realized without the consistent and generous support of the Conservancy's Board of Trustees, including Sheila Davidson, Board Chair, and David Berliner, Chair Emeritus. Deepest thanks to Ron Pizzuti, Art Committee Chair, for his unending commitment to artists and public art and to Sarah Stein-Sapir, who as a Board member and Art Council Chair has energized a community around the art program. Executive Director Holly Leicht supported the project as it championed the role of women in a just society.

*Havah*... was a complex undertaking. Tom Reidy, outstanding Director of Capital and Special Projects, brought it home. His orchestration of deadlines, fabrication responsibilities, engineering demands, installation requirements, and public safety has been unparalleled.

Truth Murray-Cole, our wonderful colleague, has lent her invaluable efforts to the art program. Tasha Naula, Public Programs Associate, managed these programs. Nicole Rivers, Yah Jeffries, Rosina Roa, Dana Klein, and Amelia Rogers are outstanding colleagues. Please join me in expressing thanks to Madison Square Park Conservancy's dedicated staff, listed on page 61 of this volume.

*Havah... to breathe, air, life* has received wonderful support. All of us at Madison Square Park Conservancy, the artists whose work we commission, and the communities who view the work are grateful to those listed on page 59 of this volume, who have been so generous to the exhibition and who continue to ensure that the art program can realize work that can be seen by all citizens in a democratic environment.

Gratitude to Elizabeth Goldstein and Phyllis Cohen at the Municipal Art Society who first introduced us to Presiding Justice Rolando Acosta, Justice Peter Moulton and Justice Dianne Renwick at the neighboring Courthouse. We appreciate support from our colleagues at the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation: Jonathan Kuhn,



Jennifer Lantzas, and Elizabeth Masalla. Lynda Churilla, Rashmi Gill at Vivid Clicks, Yasunori Matsui, Elaine Martin, and Chris Roque have trained their lenses to document the work.

With *Havah... to breathe, air, life*, Shahzia Sikander's art has entered the realm of civic space; it has met the dialogue with fierce strength and exceptional creativity. She has bestowed a new visual language on a prominent historic New York building and on a public park and has offered a vision of triumph for women and justice. Through the power of this project, Sikander's sculpture has been elevated to unexpected heights. It symbolically invites all of us to soar.

1. Jan Howard, "Unexpected Juxtapositions," in *Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities*, ed. Sadia Abbas and Jan Howard (Munich: Hirmer, 2020), 73.
2. "Vasif Kortun Interviews Shahzia Sikander," in *Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities*, 107.
3. Dan Bilefsky, "Move Over [sic] Moses and Zoroaster: Manhattan Has a New Female Lawgiver," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2023, updated January 27, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/arts/design/discrimination-sculpture-madison-park-sikander-women.html?searchResultPosition=1>.
4. "Lifting Women and Justice," public program at Sony Square, February 6, 2023, with Justice Judith Gische, Becca Heller, and Shahzia Sikander.
5. Shahzia Sikander, "Artist Statement," Madison Square Park Conservancy, 2023, [https://madisonsquarepark.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SS\\_Artist-statement\\_2.24.23-1.pdf](https://madisonsquarepark.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SS_Artist-statement_2.24.23-1.pdf).
6. Rhea Nayyar, "An Afternoon in the Park with Shahzia Sikander's Golden Monuments," *Hyperallergic*, January 24, 2023, <https://hyperallergic.com/794827/an-afternoon-in-the-park-with-shahzia-sikanders-golden-monuments/>.
7. Lilly Wei, "ArtSeen: Shahzia Sikander: *Havah... to breathe, air, life*," *The Brooklyn Rail*, February 2023, <https://brooklynrail.org/2023/02/artseen/Shahzia-Sikander-Havahto-breathe-air-life>.
8. "The Striking Public Art of Shahzia Sikander," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2023, online; February 6, 2023, in print, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/02/06/the-striking-public-art-of-shahzia-sikander>.



FIG. 5





FIG. 6

## Introduction

Dr. María C. Gaztambide

When Shahzia Sikander's *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* opened in Madison Square Park in January 2023, the sublime beauty of her new sculptures was lauded by the national press and passersby alike. In the wake of the exhibition's New York debut, I was also struck by how judgment—indeed life itself—is often a matter of perception. *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* brought to the fore a much larger debate on justice triangulated by the universal necessity for legal fairness, our opinions, and the fragility of this inalienable right. The sheer number of divergent viewpoints left me with little doubt that while justice is conceptually and actively vibrant, it can mean very different things across cultures, races, and genders.

But what if there were more inclusive frameworks for thinking about justice? Sikander operates, if not thrives, between loaded questions such as this one, questions that teeter between the obvious (what most of us profess) and the aspirational (what we *could* be). Yet she refuses to conform. "I like to believe that the function of art is to allow multiple meanings and possibilities, to open up space for a more just world," the artist wrote in her statement for *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*. "How we experience art, how we respond to it, and how we interpret it is an open-ended premise. My intent as an artist is to create something wondrous and with many possible associations—something that can generate thought and produce difference." In her work, themes of race, empire, language, colonialism, sexuality, and gender (and, especially, their fluidities) veil and reveal multilayered meanings, vernaculars that don't fit comfortably in the Eastern or Western canon.

From the very outset, *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* has been a project filled with optimism and possibility. Our collaboration with Madison Square Park Conservancy enabled both institutions to generate, together, the conditions for Sikander to explore new and more ambitious creative territories. It also allowed us to bring this exceptional project to Houston, the city where she first interrogated some of the complexities that have come to

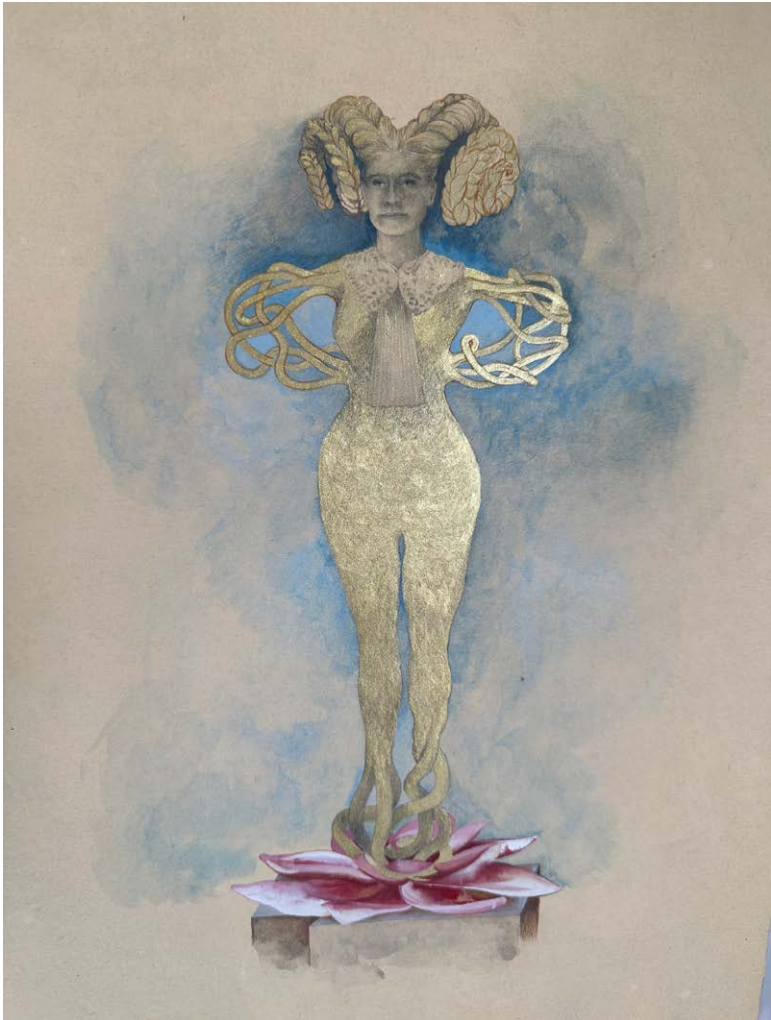


FIG. 7

characterize her mature work. It was in Houston where, as a fellow of the Core Residency Program at the Museum of Fine Arts in the mid-1990s, she first experimented with layering and overlapping narratives across contexts. Houston's wealth of immigrant communities and the work of Project Row Houses, which with its people was a frequent subject from this period, broadened Sikander's purview. It was here in Houston where the fragmented female and androgynous bodies of her early miniatures took flight, establishing the foundation for an idea that she often refers to as the "divine circle": a lexicon of themes and forms to which she is perpetually drawn and to which she



FIG. 8

often returns. This concentric practice expands and contracts, requiring her to focus her attention (directing ours) at some times on the very personal, at others on the broad human condition. And yet, infallibly, Sikander's work continues to challenge us, to ask us to reconsider our own positions while creating space for those of others. And, in these ways of reason—her ways—*Havah... to breathe, air, life* is no exception.

1. Shahzia Sikander, "Artist Statement," Madison Square Park Conservancy, 2023, [https://madisonsquarepark.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SS\\_Artist-statement\\_2.24.23-1.pdf](https://madisonsquarepark.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SS_Artist-statement_2.24.23-1.pdf).





FIG. 9





FIG. 10

## Artist's Statement

Shahzia Sikander

The image of justice as a woman has been present for centuries, but women gained juridical voice only in the past one. Despite years of women's struggles for legal, socio-economic, and political equality, gender bias still creates barriers for many women, whether in health and education or in economic opportunities, and women continue to face gender-based violence and race and class discrimination.

The essential role of visual representations of justice and ethics in judiciary spaces is one of many aspects in the relationship between art and the law, or how the image and law relate to each other. Various authors have explored the idea and image of blind justice, the development of the blindfolded allegorical figure with which we are all familiar, and the visualizations that depart from this well-known type. The intertwined concepts of law, art, and identity are explored in books such as *Law and the Image: The Authority of Art and the Aesthetics of Law*, edited by Costas Dounizas and Lynda Nead, and the comprehensive survey of representations of justice from the Renaissance to the present by Judith Resnik and Dennis Curtis.

I define my practice as that of a thinker. I think through my hand. Thinking collectively with mind and hand creates an armature of research, clarifies ideas, and connects thought to gesture, to action, to practice. Critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration are the three tenets on which I have built my entire understanding of being an artist. How culture, society, and economy intersect, as well as how communities coalesce, plays a role in how art functions in overlapping spaces. I like to believe that the function of art is to allow multiple meanings and possibilities, to open up space for a more just world. How we experience art, how we respond to it, and how we interpret: this is an open-ended premise. My intent as an artist is to create something wondrous and with many possibilities of associations, something that can generate thought and produce difference.

I have always had an affinity for the anti-monument within my practice. My work engages the past without



glorifying it. It doesn't lay claim to any grandiosity. It is often ephemeral. There are works on paper, murals, installations, and animations that are rarely seen through the lens of the anti-monument. To remedy that, I thought: All I need to do is make a drawing into a sculpture. Drawing implies movement in time and across formats and mediums. It is a means of imagining and bringing forms to life. Space, velocity, magnitude, direction—all essential elements inherent in the process of drawing—become active in different ways through thought and action, through animation, music, and sculpture.

In 2017, I was on the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers in New York; being exposed to tense situations around public monuments, their complicated histories, historical reckoning, and conflicts between competing visions of history was informative. The discussions spoke to me, as my work had a similar ethos, engaging with colonial and orientalist histories and their often reductive representations of the other.

My project in Madison Square Park is one of the most profound and meaningful opportunities I have ever had. I have lived in New York City since 1997 and am inspired daily by its multifaceted histories and communities, and it is with much heart and gratitude that I engage in this partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy.

My artistic process starts with reading and research, engagement with community, and careful listening. Working across genres, fields, and media, I often cull stories that center women. What is women's sense of self versus someone else's idea of us? I had come across the figurative sculptures at the Appellate Division Courthouse in Manhattan while in the course of my research a few years ago. When the Conservancy invited me to submit a proposal, I thought immediately of the courthouse's proximity to the park and began sketching ideas about a possible relationship between the two locations.

The body is a powerful tool that carries its social construction. It can also function as a site of resistance. The feminine is at the center of the two sculptures *NOW* and *Witness*. The form of the figure is stylized and enigmatic. It is female and fluid. Part of the body loops out and into itself, in place of arms and feet, offering a nonfixed idea to the notion of the body—something amorphous, like the self. It refuses to be fixed, grounded, or stereotyped. The self-rooted body represents the resilience of women, who can carry their roots wherever they go, suggesting the paradox of rootedness, questioning the fallacy of assimilation versus foreignness. The sculptures are temporary and not a fixed point in the landscape, nor are they symbolic of any fixed ideas or of a specific community. No one human occupant on a plinth can represent multiple histories, ideologies, or experiences. The sculpture *Witness*, at eighteen feet high, sits near the park entrance at 25th Street and Fifth Avenue. It takes inspiration from the spectacular stained-glass ceiling dome of the Appellate courtroom, with its translucency and defined architectural properties. I thought of reimagining the dome as a house, a space demarcating a site of renewal. The inverted dome transformed into the metal frame (hoopskirt) of *Witness*, surrounding the body and functioning as its armor and support. The longitudinal and latitudinal lines of the ceiling dome are echoed in the skirt, becoming the imaginary "party" lines coming together across east, west, north, south.

Mapped on the surface of this metal structure is the word "havah," which means "air," "atmosphere," "to breathe." It is also the name Eve. The designed letters are created with ungrouted glass tesserae. The mosaic is further animated via an AR lens. In my work, I came to

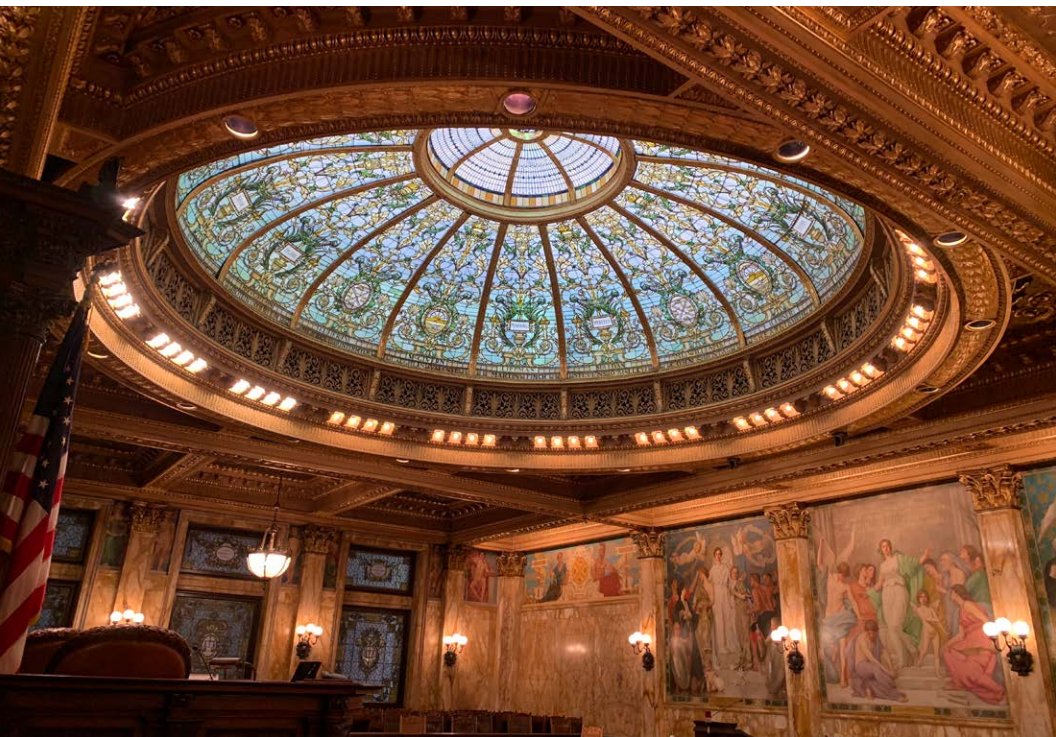


FIG. 11



FIG. 12

FIG. 13

mosaic by way of animation, by equating the pixel to the unit of the mosaic to create dynamism and by thinking about the inherent aspect of light in both materials, digital projection and glass.

In *Witness*, the feminine form is buoyant and afloat, supported by the armature of the skirt at the waist, its presence a critical part of the natural environment of the park. *NOW*, an eight-foot sculpture on the roof of the courthouse, uses the same feminine form present in *Witness*, but instead of the skirt raising the body, the body emerges out of the seat of a lotus. The lotus, with its plethora of meanings and associated abstract ideas, symbolizes a deeper truth beyond its form, alluding to perception as illusion. Popular in images in many cultures, it also expresses intangible ideas of humility, awakening, and clarity. The invisible roots of the lotus that lie below the depth of the water are echoed in the roots of the feminine figure. Its form, a circular bloom, with its petals-within-petals formation, refers to the microcosm and macrocosm in its arabesque iconographical value.

The female figure has hair braided into spiraling horns. The horns mimic the movement of the arms and are there as a symbol of the figure's sovereignty and autonomy. Women in my art are multidimensional—at times androgynous, and

always complex, proactive, confident, intelligent, and, in their playful stances, connected to the past in imaginative ways without being tied to a heteronormative lineage or conventional representations of diaspora and nation.

Femininity to me is the tension between women and power: how society perceives such a dynamic and how erasure is enacted by the social forces that shape women's lives. Throughout literature, the notion of the female has been in conversation with the visible/invisible divide, the feminine as the monstrous, the abject, the fecund, the immense, and the vulnerable. Intimacy, selfhood, valor, resistance, and femininity's intersections with race and war are markers of the fear that lurks when boundaries melt.

The recent focus on reproductive rights in the United States after the Supreme Court overturned the 1973 decision guaranteeing the right to abortion comes to the forefront. In the process, it is the dismissal, too, of the indefatigable spirit of women, who have been collectively fighting for their right to decide on their own bodies over generations. However, the enduring power lies with the people who step into and

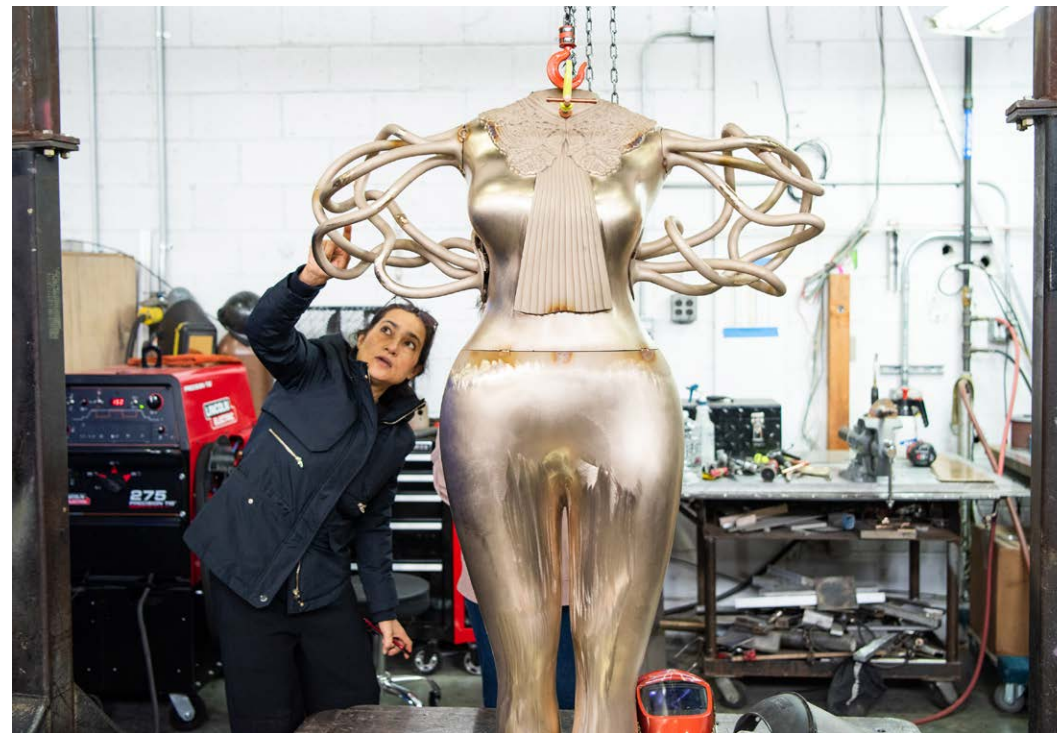


FIG. 14



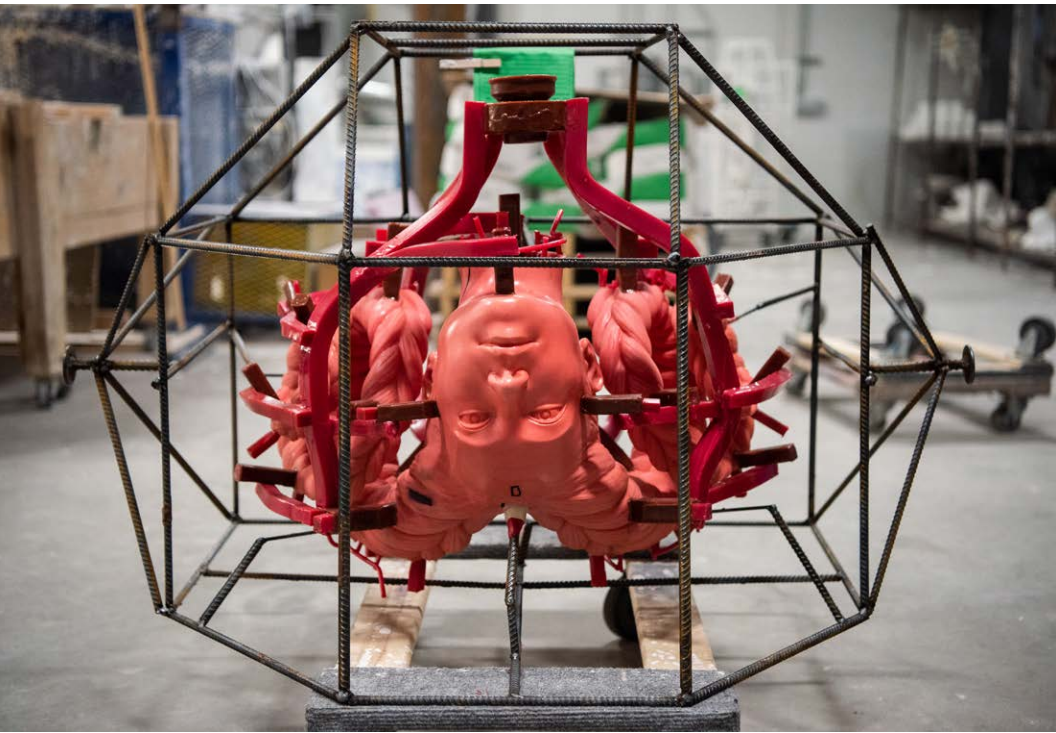


FIG. 15



FIG. 16

remain in the fight for equality. That spirit and grit is what I wanted to capture in both the sculptures.

In recent opinion polls, the public regards the court as partisan and political in how it exerts power. The luminous figure is also a nod to Ruth Bader Ginsburg—as seen in the detail adorning her collar. With Ginsburg’s death and the reversal of *Roe*, there was a setback to women’s progress.

On the roof of the courthouse are nine male statues of ancient lawgivers, representing the world’s great legal systems, each statue by a different artist. When the courthouse was opened, a statue of Mohammed, representing Islamic law, stood on the westernmost point of the roof facing 25th Street, where Zoroaster is now positioned. In 1955, at the request of the governments of Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia, the statue was removed and destroyed, since images of Mohammed are prohibited under Muslim law. The statues previously to his left were each moved over one place, leaving an empty pedestal on the easternmost point. While the lawgivers represented are all men, allegorical representations of women abound in the murals and sculptures throughout the courthouse. Lady Justice is flanked by her female aides Peace and Plenty. Wisdom is attended by Learning, Experience, Humility, and Love, and by Faith, Patience, Doubt, and Inspiration, all women. Equity is a woman with an evenly balanced scale; Tradition is a woman with an endless chain; State is a woman with a red cloak who holds a book of statutes, with Force and Liberty at her sides. Truth is a kneeling woman with a mirror, Knowledge has a torch and a book, and throned Prudence holds a compass. Discord is a woman with red hair clutching a torch and a knife, Vengeance has a vicious dog straining at its leash, Honesty wears a helmet and shield, and Transgression wears a wispy red garment.

Moderation is a seated woman with a shawl over her head who holds a bridle and reins. Other females depicted are Perspicuity contemplating a glass bubble, Research reading, Fame seated with wings, Painting with a palette, Architecture with a compass and chart. Sculpture is depicted as a man with a sculpting tool.

In the triangular pediment on the façade of the courthouse is a sculpture representing the Triumph of Law, in which the central figure is a seated woman with two tablets, one reading “*Lex scripta*” (written or statutory law) and the



other “Lex tradita” (related or common law). Farther back in the composition are a ram (authority) and an owl perched on a crescent moon (wisdom and enlightenment).

Many of the symbols and images present in the courthouse iconographies are carried from historical times, visually reproduced in juridical contexts, and some continue to shape ideas and arguments. The blindfold as ubiquitous to justice appears as a paradox against the abundance of these visual iconographies. Art and juridical norms are constantly being reevaluated and interpreted in the world. Both embody a dynamic that is alive and tethered to its present moment. Such a dance opens up the animation *Reckoning*, where two forms mimicking warriors are entangled and in joust. The animation alludes to the interstices, the transitory, the mythos of the migrant and the citizen, women, and power, the colonized, the artist, and all those who are caught between worlds, artistic vocabularies, cultures, practices, and histories.

Art lives, survives, inspires. It is messy, it is complicated, it is very much like life. For me, it is about knowledge construction: how we reckon with our otherness in a shifting world, how we approximate, reproduce, and reenact our culture and history. Whatever we make, consume, and give back, it has resonance and consequence beyond our immediate lives. History itself is effectively an account of the movement of objects and bodies. Trade, slavery, migration, colonial occupation—these are underlying currents, the root axes of modernity. How history is told, who gets to tell it, exposes the hierarchies of power in our world. I am interested in history, in politics, and equally in the dynamism of form. Form as something alive and in conversation with its time, space, and language.

March 13, 2023



FIG. 17





FIG. 18

FIG. 19

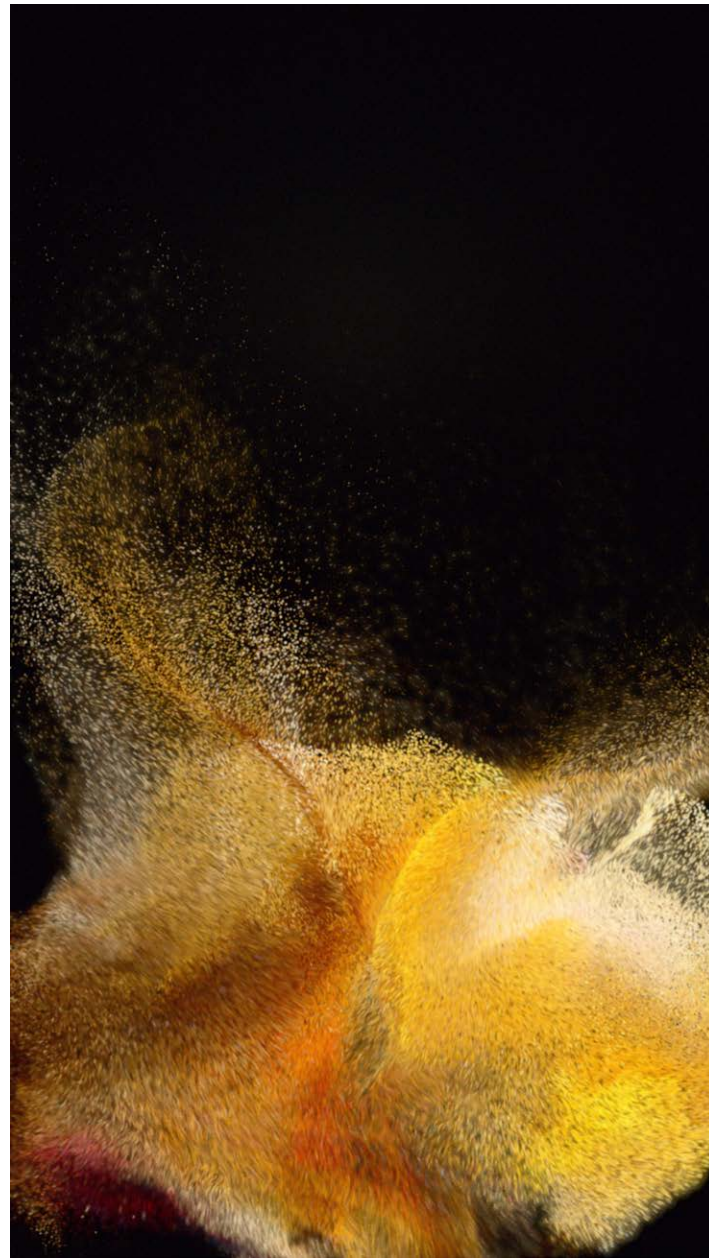


FIG. 20





FIG. 21

## The Representation of Justice

Honorable Rolando T. Acosta, Presiding Justice  
Honorable Dianne T. Renwick, Associate Justice  
Honorable Peter H. Moulton, Associate Justice

In the United States, courthouse art and architecture are usually directed toward embodying the foundational principles of courts in a democracy: equal justice under law, separation of powers, transparency of adjudication, among other values. The Courthouse of the Appellate Division, First Department is a particularly rich example of this architectural and artistic heritage. The murals in the lobby and the courtroom feature allegorical themes on the nature of justice, the virtues of wisdom and study, and the latent need for force to ensure compliance with the law. The roof is adorned with statues embodying these themes, and with statues depicting individual lawgivers from the past.

While the law in the United States has proven to be dynamic, and gradually has changed to include protections for marginalized groups, the art in the courthouse has remained static and displays aesthetics that reflect a less inclusive America. For example, the only recognizably non-white person in the murals is the Indigenous American in the seal of the City of New York. Justice and Wisdom, and other attributes of a well-ordered system of justice, are embodied mostly in female forms; the actual lawyers and lawgivers commemorated, however, are all male. The lawgiver statues on the top of the courthouse were also uniformly male, until *NOW*.

The First Department's Representation of Justice Initiative is a sustained program to add to, and contextualize, the Court's existing art. We are fortunate that our inaugural project is this partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy in presenting *Havah... to breathe, air, life* by Shahzia Sikander. As part of this installation, Sikander's stunning golden *NOW* joins the statues of the male lawgivers on our roof. The statue is like a grace note that changes the tonal direction of a symphony.

The project's central theme is to elevate women in the conception and execution of justice. While some viewers





FIG. 22



FIG. 23

may interpret *NOW* to be political in some way, the statue does not “take a side” on any issue that might come before the Court. *NOW* is aesthetically intriguing and illustrates powerful principles: Women deserve to be on equal footing with men, accorded equal justice, and recognized for their contributions to the development of law as judges, lawyers, litigants, and citizens. We are proud of what it represents.





FIG. 24

## The Flying Woman

Aruna D'Souza

Shahzia Sikander's *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* consists of four parts, including one sculpture sited in Madison Square Park and another installed on a plinth of the courthouse of the Appellate Division, First Department of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. In the park, *Witness* is a monumental female figure, gold-colored, with hair coiffed into elaborate spiraling braids that look like ram's horns, and arms and legs that devolve into tangled roots. She is raised off the ground by a gridded armature that holds her at the waist; it is adorned with mosaic-covered scrolls in Arabic lettering that reads "havah," which means "air" or "atmosphere" in Urdu and is the name Eve in Arabic, Hebrew, and other languages. She is the first woman—a giver of life. Her chin is slightly lifted; her eyes look out over our heads in a thousand-mile stare, as if she is thinking big thoughts. On the courthouse roof is her gold-patinated bronze twin, *NOW*, who takes her place at the end of a row of male lawgivers: Zoroaster, Justinian, Manu, King Louis IX of France, among others. This iteration stands, resplendent, on a deep fuchsia lotus—an emphatic breath of fresh air amid the dull gray limestone of the building's façade and sculptural decoration.

Sikander's work draws on the conventions of Central and South Asian miniature painting, even now, though she has long moved away from any strict adherence to its formal rules. One of these conventions is showing multiple narrative moments within a single frame. I choose to think that *Havah . . .* follows this idea: we are seeing not two discrete figures, but one figure over time. The woman in the park and the woman on the rooftop are a single entity who soars from one place to the other, from the earth to the sky, from the mundane, terrestrial realm to that of philosophy and justice. (The effect is underlined by *Apparition*, an augmented reality experience that accompanies the project: look through your phone screen and you will see replicants of this being hovering in front of and around you, refusing to be tied down or fixed in any way, leading you from the park to the courthouse.)



In my mind, I call her the flying woman. She is the latest in Sikander's inventive and ever-changing repertoire of avatars that incorporate an amorphous array of signs and symbols. Hybrid beings with limbs composed of roots, wearing protective "skirts" and/or standing on lotus flowers, date back to the late 1990s in the artist's work. *Uprooted Order I* (1997) deploys all these elements: a woman, painted in the Mughal style in vegetable dye, dry pigment, watercolor, gold, and tea is overlaid with a white wash emphasizing the lines of her dress; underneath its folds, another woman, naked, curls up in safety. Given the arrangement of bodies, the snarl of the first woman's feet evokes not only roots but umbilical cords. She is suspended over a pink lotus, a potent symbol in the religious stew of South Asian cultures—through the course of centuries, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism have all adopted the flower to evoke beauty, prosperity, and fertility. (In recent years, under the neofascist rule of Narendra Modi, it has been claimed by far-right, Hindu nationalist, antidemocratic forces in India, but Sikander's embrace of the plant, which grows from a rhizome, refusing the logic of a single root or origin point in favor of endless spreading and adaptation, pushes back on such Hindutva chauvinism.)

More abstract now, the woman whose roots float free, ready to attach where she pleases, is a ghostly figure who veils the image of princely (masculine) power in *Perilous Order* (1989–1997); she shows up again, now with many arms wielding dangerous weapons, a veiled Kali, in *Hood's Red Rider II* (1997) and *A Slight and Pleasing Dislocation* (1993). For Sikander it was the syncretic nature of the figure that fascinated her. "The referents are manifold," she has said. "The Jewish Shekhina, or Saqueena in Quranic parlance—the feminine complement to the masculine divine—and the chthonic mother goddesses of the Indus Valley."<sup>1</sup> In a sketchbook from around 1994, the figure appears in multiple forms, with fecund breasts and dangling legs, surrounded (caged, protected) by a structure that suggests a ribboned burqa or spider's legs, a yurt or the bars of a prison. That protective/restrictive device is found again in *Cycles and Transitions* (1996) and, starkly isolated, in *Housed* (1995), among many other works. In *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*, the form is repurposed to evoke the stained-glass ceiling of the courthouse's central chamber.



FIG. 25

I have always thought of this flying woman as a perfect embodiment of the diasporic subject, not quite embedded in a single place yet able to find a home anywhere. But I realize now, looking at *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*, that it is also a representation of the female subject in the symbolic landscape of patriarchy: an unfixed signifier, defined only by its otherness to masculinity, a floating cipher that cannot be pinned down, that possesses none of its own meaning. Sikander refuses to succumb to that fate, though: her rooted/rootless woman replicates herself, finding her power in her ability to upset order, to thrive in a state of dislocation.

So, too, the image of the woman with ram's horns is a recurring theme—sometimes her spiraling antlers are rendered, as in *Witness* and *NOW*, as thick braids, but often she is more bestial than that. In *Pleasure Pillars* (2001), it



was Sikander's own head that sported these fantastic striped trophies. The trope is not the artist's alone: horned gods and goddesses abound in world religions, from ancient Egypt and Greece to other parts and eras of Africa and Europe. In the Abrahamic faiths the horned beast is associated with forces of evil, chaos, and destruction—the devil himself. But again, Sikander reveals to us what's really at stake in such conceptions. In the biblical story of creation, Satan and Eve are intertwined the way a snake wraps around a tree limb; woman is the vehicle for iniquity, the temptress, the instrument of evil. Sikander takes this idea, one that runs through so many cultures and epochs and philosophies—of woman as a threat, as an embodiment of unspeakable desire, as taint—and turns negativity into power. Her Eve, her Havah, sports her horns like a crown, as a point of pride. She understands the endless projections onto herself as her strength.

The reactions to the images of female potency that Sikander creates are almost hilariously predictable. In 2001, she began a mural for a New York City law firm; the project was focused on her headless Kali avatar from *A Slight and Pleasing Dislocation*, the figure's hands holding not only weapons but also the scales of justice. But this image of potency, proposed by a Pakistani American woman no less, was too much for those who commissioned the work, and they asked her to modify her conception. She refused. It's not surprising, I think, that she wanted to return to this image for *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*, which was also destined for a setting that is tied to the law and to justice. And it is perhaps once again not surprising that in the days since the sculpture was unveiled, there has been outrage from certain quarters that Sikander has been permitted to install a "satanic" symbol in the park and on top of a courthouse.<sup>2</sup> An opinion piece in *The New York Times* was (very) slightly more subtle but no less irrational in its response, citing Sikander's insistence on drawing on cross-cultural symbolism and refusing a single meaning as a threat not just to aesthetic sensibilities but to religion and spiritual faith itself.<sup>3</sup>

What *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* contains that *A Slight and Pleasing Dislocation* did not is a reference to an actual powerful woman. Both *Witness* and *NOW* sport the lacy

FIG. 26

FIG. 27



jabot that Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a champion of reproductive rights, used to wear with her austere black Supreme Court robes. For Sikander, the project is very much tied to the urgency of ensuring bodily autonomy in the wake of the court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. In the face of widespread attempts to control women's bodies—and, it must be noted, the bodies of any who seek to define themselves outside patriarchal norms, including trans people—Sikander offers us a body that cannot be pinned down, that finds its power and meaning in floating, like air, like breath, like life itself should be. A flying woman is a woman who is free.

1. Commentary on *A Slight and Pleasing Dislocation*, The Morgan Library & Museum, <https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/shahzia-sikander/slight-and-pleasing-dislocation>.
2. After the 2023 Grammy Awards presentation, a meme circulated suggesting that Madonna's hairstyle—circular braids on each side of her head—referred to Sikander's statue. Though the meme meant to hint at the depravity of both artwork and singer, I revel in the idea that Madonna recognized the kind of power Sikander's figure embodies.
3. Ross Douthat, "Be Open to Spiritual Experience. Also, Be Really Careful," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/opinion/american-religion-spirituality.html>.





FIG. 28

## Shahzia Sikander

### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

**2023** *Havah... to breathe, air, life*

*Witness*, 2023

Painted milled high-density foam, steel, fiberglass, glass tile  
18 × 13 × 13 feet

*NOW*, 2023

Patinated bronze  
8 × 4 × 4 feet

*Reckoning*, 2020

HD video animation with sound; music by Du Yun,  
animation by Patrick O'Rourke  
4 minutes, 17 seconds

Collection the artist, courtesy Sean Kelly

*Apparition*, 2023

Augmented reality experience  
The augmented reality experience is provided by Snap and  
built by AR studio MousePack.

### DETAILS

**1969** Born in Lahore, Pakistan

**1991** BFA, National College of Arts, Lahore

**1995** MFA, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

Lives and works in New York City



To learn more about *Havah... to breathe, air, life*, please visit:  
<https://madisonsquarepark.org/art/exhibitions/shahzia-sikander-havah-to-breathe-air-life/>

Open the Snapchat app on your device and scan this Snapcode to unlock the AR experience that accompanies *Havah... to breathe, air, life*.



## BIOGRAPHY

Shahzia Sikander (American-Pakistan, b. 1969) earned a BFA from National College of Arts in Lahore and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and participated in Glassell School of Art's CORE Program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She is a MacArthur Foundation Fellow and received the Art in Embassies Medal of Arts. Sikander's innovative work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Through a broad range of materials and methods (miniature painting, works on paper, video, mosaic, and sculpture), Sikander expands and subverts premodern and classical Central and South Asian painting traditions. She is distinguished for launching the form known as neo-miniature. She investigates concepts in language, trade, empire, and migration through feminist perspectives, and colonial and imperial power structures. Her traveling exhibition *Extraordinary Realities* opened at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York in 2021 and traveled to the RISD Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. *Shahzia Sikander: Unbound*, opened in 2021 at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, and explored the artist's innovation with manuscript techniques. The artist became a Fukuoka laureate in 2022 as a recipient of the Arts and Culture Prize from Fukuoka City, Japan. In 2023, she received the Pollock Prize for Creativity from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

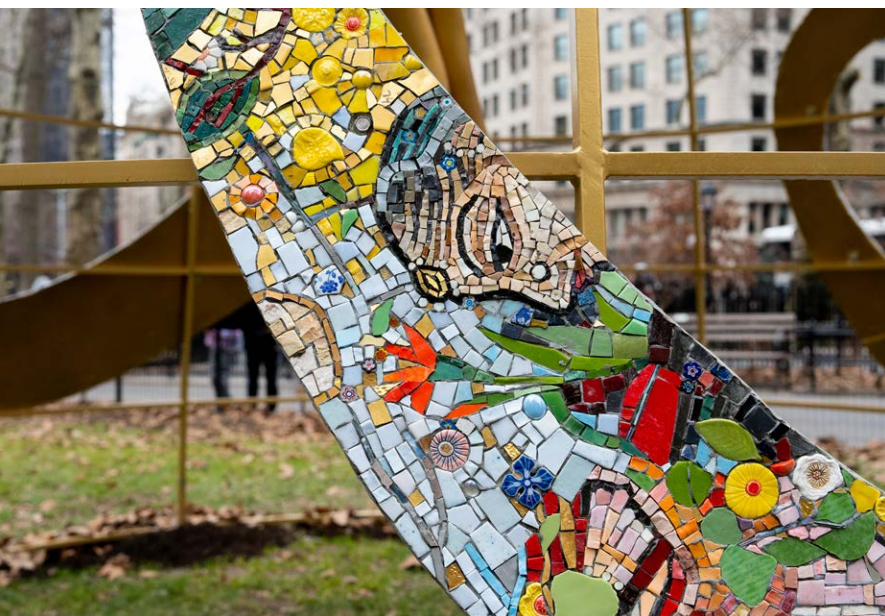


FIG. 29

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023** *Loss, Longing, Belonging: Shahzia Sikander's Khorfakkan Series*, New York University, New York
- 2022** *Shahzia Sikander: Radiant Dissonance*, Sean Kelly, Los Angeles
- 2022** *Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities*, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
- 2021** *Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities*, Morgan Library and Museum, New York; RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island  
*Shahzia Sikander: Unbound*, West Court Gallery, Jesus College, Cambridge, United Kingdom  
*Shahzia Sikander: Infinite Woman*, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2020** *Weeping Willows, Liquid Tongues*, Sean Kelly, New York
- 2019** *Disruption as Rapture*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina
- 2017** *A Journey into the Great Unknown*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco  
*Disruption as Rapture*, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto  
*Parallax*, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota  
*Parallax*, Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu
- 2016** *Ecstasy as Sublime, Heart as Vector*, MAXXI (Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo), Rome  
*Shahzia Sikander: Apparatus of Power*, Chantal Miller Gallery, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Hong Kong
- 2015** *Gopi Contagion*, Times Square Arts: Midnight Moment, Times Square, New York  
*Parallax*, Tufts University Art Gallery, Medford, Massachusetts  
*Parallax*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Tufts University Art Gallery, Medford, Massachusetts  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York
- 2014** *Parallax*, Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden  
*Parallax*, Linda Pace Foundation, San Antonio  
*Parallax*, Nicolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen  
Project Gallery: *Shahzia Sikander*, Pérez Art Museum, Miami



- 2013** *Parallax*, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London
- 2012** Kogod Courtyard, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.  
*The Fertile Crescent*, Institute for Women and Art, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey  
*The Last Post*, Linda Pace Foundation, San Antonio; Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- 2011** *Shahzia Sikander: Sift, Rift, Drip, Shift*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York  
*Shahzia Sikander: The Exploding Company Man and Other Abstractions*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco; Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston
- 2010** *Shahzia Sikander: Prolonged Exposure to Agitation*, Galleria Valentina Bonomo, Rome  
*Transformations*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
- 2009** *Authority as Approximation*, Para/Site, Hong Kong  
*I am also not my own enemy*, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London  
*Shahzia Sikander Selects: Works from the Permanent Collection*, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York  
*Stalemate*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York
- 2008** *Interstitial: 24 Faces and the 25th Frame*, Daadgalerie, Berlin  
*Intimate Ambivalence*, IKON Gallery, Birmingham, England
- 2007** *Shahzia Sikander*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
- 2006** *Shahzia Sikander*, Valentina Bonomo Arte Contemporanea, Rome  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia
- 2005** *51 Ways of Looking*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York  
*Dissonance to Detour*, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Miami Art Museum, Miami
- 2004** *Contemporary Links: Shahzia Sikander*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego  
*Shahzia Sikander: Flip Flop*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego  
*Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis*, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York
- 2003** *Drawing to Drawing*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle  
*SpiNN*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York
- 2002** *Shahzia Sikander*, Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury, Vermont
- 2001** *Intimacy*, Artpace, San Antonio  
*Shahzia Sikander*, Asia Society, New York
- 2000** *Acts of Balance*, Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York
- 1999** *Directions: Shahzia Sikander*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
- 1998** *Shahzia Sikander*, Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago  
*Shahzia Sikander: Drawings and Miniatures*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Kansas City, Missouri
- 1997** *A Kind of Slight and Pleasing Dislocation*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco  
*Murals and Miniatures*, Deitch Projects, New York  
*Shahzia Sikander*, The Drawing Center, New York
- 1996** *Art Celebration 96: Shahzia Sikander*, Barbara Davis Gallery, Houston; Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
*Knock, Knock, Who's There? Mithila, Mithila Who?*, Project Row Houses, Houston
- 1992** Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, D.C.  
Rohtas Gallery, Islamabad





FIG. 30

## COMMISSIONS

- 2021 *Caesura*, permanent museum commission, Cincinnati Art Museum
- 2020 *Mary-Am*, public installation, Midtown Park, Houston
- 2016 *Disruption as Rapture*, permanent museum commission, Philadelphia Museum of Art  
*Ecstasy as Sublime*, *Heart as Vector* and *Quintuplet-Effect*, Permanent Campus Commission, Julis Romo Rabinowitz Building and Louis A. Simpson International Building, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
- 2015 *Gopi Contagion*, Times Square Arts: Midnight Moment, Times Square, New York



FIG. 31



## SELECTED AWARDS AND HONORS

- 2023** Pollock Prize for Creativity, Pollock-Krasner Foundation, New York
- 2022** Fukuoka Arts and Culture Prize, Fukuoka, Japan
- 2017** KB17 Shahneela and Farhan Faruqi Popular Choice Art Prize (Karachi Biennale), Karachi
- 2016** Religion and the Arts Award, Atlanta  
Vikram and Geetanjali Kirloskar Visiting Scholar in Painting, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island
- 2015** Asia Society Award for Significant Contribution to Contemporary Art, Asia Society Art Gala, Hong Kong  
Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York
- 2014** Art Prize in Time-Based Art from Grand Rapids Museum  
Bildmuseet Umeå University, Sweden
- 2013** Master Juror, Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Jhenaidah, Bangladesh
- 2012** Inaugural Medal of Arts, U.S. Department of State (Art in Embassies), Washington, D.C.
- 2010** SCMP Art Futures Award, Hong Kong International Art Fair  
Academician of the National Academy Museum, Hong Kong
- 2009** Inaugural Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Creative Arts Fellowship  
Guggenheim Asian Arts Council, New York
- 2008** Performing and Visual Arts Achiever of the Year, South Asian Excellence Awards, Sri Lanka



FIG. 32



- 2007** Artist in residence, Berliner Künstlerprogramm, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Berlin
- 2006** Young Global Leader, World Economic Forum  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Award
- 2005** Tamgha-e-imtiaz, National Medal of Honor, Government of Pakistan  
Jennifer Howard Coleman Award, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
- 2003** Commendation Award, Mayor's Office, New York  
South Asian Women's Creative Collective Achievement Award, New York
- 1999** Joan Mitchell Award
- 1997** Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, New York
- 1995** Core Fellowship, Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
- 1993** Graduate Fellowship Award, Rhode Island School of Design
- 1992** Shakir Ali Award/Kipling Award (highest merit award), National College of Arts, Lahore  
Sharif Award (excellence in miniature painting), National College of Arts, Lahore  
Distinction Award, thesis project, National College of Arts, Lahore



FIG. 33



## Public Programs

**FEBRUARY 6, 2023**

*Lifting Women and Justice*  
Panel Discussion with  
Becca Heller, Associate  
Justice Judith J. Gische,  
and Shahzia Sikander  
Sony Square

**WEDNESDAYS THROUGHOUT  
THE EXHIBITION**

Lunchtime Tours of  
*Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*  
Madison Square Park

**APRIL 10–APRIL 17, 2023**

Reflection Board  
Madison Square Park

**APRIL 26, 2023**

Art Talk with Aruna D’Souza  
Madison Square Park

**MAY 17, 2023**

Art Talk with Eileen Myles  
Madison Square Park

**MAY 24, 2023**

Art Talk with Laura Raicovich  
Madison Square Park

**JUNE 2, 2023**

*Transforming Public Art*  
Public Art Symposium at  
SVA Theatre, including  
Xenobia Bailey  
Zoë Buckman  
Tom Finkelpearl  
Jennie Goldstein  
Ana María Hernando  
Dr. Karen Lemmey  
Truth Murray-Cole  
Sheila Pepe  
Brooke Kamin Rapaport  
Legacy Russell  
Shahzia Sikander  
Gregorio Uribe  
Gilbert Vicario

## Support

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The augmented reality experience is provided by Snap and built by AR studio MousePack.

Shahzia Sikander’s *Havah . . . to breathe, air, life* was co-commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy and Public Art of the University of Houston System.

Leadership support for the art program is provided by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Major support for the art program is provided by Sasha C. Bass, Bunny and Charles Burson, Ronald A. Pizzuti, Thornton Tomasetti, Tiffany & Co., and Anonymous.

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Madison Square Park Conservancy is a public/private partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.



## Acknowledgments

### Madison Square Park Conservancy

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, nurture, and enhance Madison Square Park, a dynamic 6.2-acre public green space, creating an environment that fosters moments of inspiration. The Conservancy is committed to engaging the community through its dynamic public art program, beautiful gardens, and inviting amenities. Madison Square Park Conservancy is licensed by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to manage Madison Square Park and is responsible for raising 100 percent of the funds necessary to operate the park.

#### Eric Adams

Mayor  
City of New York

#### Susan M. Donoghue

Commissioner  
New York City  
Department of  
Parks & Recreation

#### Laurie Cumbo

Commissioner  
Department of  
Cultural Affairs

### Land Acknowledgment

Madison Square Park is located on Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape (Delaware) people. We recognize that this land was forcibly taken, resulting in the displacement and genocide of the Lenape (Delaware) Nations. Madison Square Park Conservancy respectfully acknowledges the Lenape (Delaware) people—past, present, and future—who continue to live, work, and connect to this land.

The Conservancy honors the Lenape (Delaware) people, the original stewards of this land, through our commitment to a series of sustainability and restoration initiatives. In the coming years, we aim to reduce our carbon imprint, promote sustainable land management, and reintroduce to the park species of fauna and flora indigenous to Lenapehoking.

For more information on Madison Square Park Conservancy and its programs, please visit [madisonsquarepark.org](http://madisonsquarepark.org).

## Madison Square Park Conservancy

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Executive Director

#### Brian Adams

Park Crew Member

#### Lorenzo Arrington

Park Manager

#### Jermaine Bailey

Associate Park Manager

#### Christina Carr

Operations Manager

#### Michael Collazo

Park Crew Member

#### Tumede Culver

Park Crew Member

#### Ian Devaney

Senior Communications  
and Marketing Manager

#### Emily Dickinson

Senior Sustainability  
Manager

#### Luke Downs

Operations Manager

#### Mike James

Corporate Relationships  
& Operations Associate

#### Yah Jeffries

Senior Art Department  
Manager

#### Dasean Jenkins

Park Crew Member

#### Jessica Kaplan

Horticulture Manager

#### Dana Klein

Senior Events Manager

#### Stephanie Lucas

Director of Horticulture  
and Park Operations

#### Quintonya McJunkin

Park Ambassador  
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#### Aiyanna Milligan

Horticulture Associate

#### Kye Montero

Park Crew Member

#### Truth Murray-Cole

Senior Curatorial  
Manager

#### Tasha Naula

Public Programs  
Associate

#### Nate Perlmeter

Park Ambassador

#### Erik Ramos

Associate Park Manager

#### Brooke Kamin Rapaport

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Danny Meyer



FIG. 34



## Madison Square Park Conservancy Exhibitions

<b>2022</b>	Cristina Iglesias <i>Landscape and Memory</i> Hugh Hayden <i>Brier Patch</i>	<b>2009</b>	Shannon Plumb <i>The Park</i> Jessica Stockholder <i>Flooded Chambers Maid</i> Mel Kendrick <i>Markers</i> Bill Beirne <i>Madison Square Trapezoids, with Performance by the Vigilant Groundsman</i>
<b>2021</b>	Maya Lin <i>Ghost Forest</i>		
<b>2020</b>	Abigail DeVille <i>Light of Freedom</i> Krzysztof Wodiczko <i>Monument</i>	<b>2008</b>	Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied <i>Online Newspapers: New York Edition</i> Richard Deacon <i>Assembly</i> Tadashi Kawamata <i>Tree Huts</i> Rafael Lozano-Hemmer <i>Pulse Park</i>
<b>2019</b>	Leonardo Drew <i>City in the Grass</i>		
<b>2018</b>	Arlene Shechet <i>Full Steam Ahead</i> Diana Al-Hadid <i>Delirious Matter</i>	<b>2007</b>	Bill Fontana <i>Panoramic Echoes</i> Roxy Paine <i>Conjoined, Defunct, Erratic</i> William Wegman <i>Around the Park</i>
<b>2017</b>	Erwin Redl <i>Whiteout</i> Josiah McElheny <i>Prismatic Park</i>	<b>2006</b>	Ursula von Rydingsvard <i>Bowl with Fins, Czara z Babelkami, Damski Czepek, Ted's Desert Reigns</i>
<b>2016</b>	Martin Puryear <i>Big Bling</i>	<b>2005</b>	Jene Highstein <i>Eleven Works</i> Sol LeWitt <i>Circle with Towers, Curved Wall with Towers</i>
<b>2015</b>	Teresita Fernández <i>Fata Morgana</i> Paula Hayes <i>Gazing Globes</i>	<b>2004</b>	Mark di Suvero <i>Aesop's Fables, Double Tetrahedron, Beyond</i>
<b>2014</b>	Tony Cragg <i>Walks of Life</i> Rachel Feinstein <i>Folly</i> Iván Navarro <i>This Land Is Your Land</i>	<b>2003</b>	Wim Delvoye <i>Gothic</i>
<b>2013</b>	Giuseppe Penone <i>Ideas of Stone (Idee di pietra)</i> Orly Genger <i>Red, Yellow and Blue</i> Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder <i>Topsy-Turvy: A Camera Obscura Installation</i>	<b>2002</b>	Dan Graham <i>Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve</i> Mark Dion <i>Urban Wildlife Observation Unit</i> Dalziel + Scullion <i>Voyager</i>
<b>2012</b>	Leo Villareal <i>BUCKYBALL</i> Charles Long <i>Pet Sounds</i>	<b>2001</b>	Navin Rawanchaikul <i>I ♥ Taxi</i> Teresita Fernández <i>Bamboo Cinema</i> Tobias Rehberger <i>Tsutsumu N.Y.</i>
<b>2011</b>	Jacco Olivier <i>Stumble, Hide, Rabbit Hole, Bird, Deer, Home</i> Alison Saar <i>Feallan and Fallow</i> Jaume Plensa <i>Echo</i> Kota Ezawa <i>City of Nature</i>	<b>2000</b>	Tony Oursler <i>The Influence Machine</i> From 2000 to 2003, exhibitions were presented by the Public Art Fund on behalf of the Campaign for the New Madison Square Park.
<b>2010</b>	Jim Campbell <i>Scattered Light</i> Antony Gormley <i>Event Horizon</i> Ernie Gehr <i>Surveillance</i>		

# Photography and Figure Credits

Unless otherwise noted, all work is

Shahzia Sikander (American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
*Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*, 2023

*Witness*, 2023  
 Painted milled high-density foam, steel, fiberglass, glass tile  
 18 x 13 x 13 feet

*NOW*, 2023  
 Patinated bronze  
 8 x 4 x 4 feet

*Reckoning*, 2020  
 HD video animation with sound; music by Du Yun, animation by Patrick O'Rourke  
 4 minutes, 17 seconds

Collection the artist, courtesy Sean Kelly

*Apparition*, 2023  
 Augmented reality experience  
 The augmented reality experience is provided by Snap and built by AR studio MousePack.



**FIG 4.**  
 James Earle Fraser  
 (American, 1875-1953)  
*Contemplation of Justice*  
 Supreme Court of the United States, Washington D.C.  
 Photo by David King



**FIG. 5**  
 Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 6**  
 Photo by Yasunori Matsui



**FIG. 7**  
 Shahzia Sikander  
 (American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
 Drawing for *NOW*, part of  
*Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*,  
 2023  
 Patinated bronze  
 8 x 4 x 4 feet  
 Collection the artist, courtesy  
 Sean Kelly



**COVER AND BACK COVER**  
 Photo by Lynda Churilla



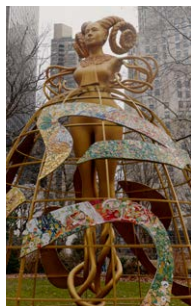
**FIG 1.**  
 Photo by Yasunori Matsui



**FIG. 8**  
 Shahzia Sikander  
 (American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
 Drawing for *Witness*, part of  
*Havah . . . to breathe, air, life*,  
 2023  
 Painted milled high-density  
 foam, steel, fiberglass, glass tile  
 18 x 13 x 13 feet  
 Collection the artist, courtesy  
 Sean Kelly



**FIG. 9**  
 Photo by Rashmi Gill



**FIG 2.**  
 Photo by Vincent Tullo



**FIG 3.**  
 Shahzia Sikander  
 (American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
*Pleasure Pillars*, 2001  
 Watercolor and dry pigment  
 on wasli paper  
 17 x 12 inches  
 Collection of Amita and  
 Purnendu Chatterjee



**FIG 10**  
 Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 11**  
 Maitland Armstrong  
 (American, 1836-1918)  
 Dome, Appellate Division  
 Courthouse, New York, 1900  
 Photo by Shahzia Sikander  
 Studio





**FIG. 12**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
Initial proposal for *Witness, air, life, 2023*  
Painted milled high-density foam, steel, fiberglass, glass tile  
18 x 13 x 13 feet  
Collection the artist, courtesy Sean Kelly



**FIG. 13**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
Drawing for *NOW, part of Havah... to breathe, air, life, 2023*  
Patinated bronze  
8 x 4 x 4 feet  
Collection the artist, courtesy Sean Kelly



**FIG. 21**  
Photo by Yasunori Matsui



**FIG. 22**  
Photo by Lynda Churilla



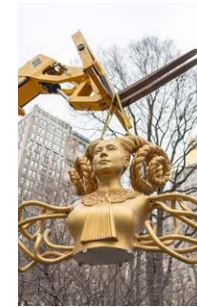
**FIG. 14**  
Photo by Chris Roque



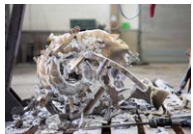
**FIG. 15**  
Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 23**  
Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 24**  
Photo by Rashmi Gill



**FIG. 16**  
Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 17**  
Photo by Haani Jetha



**FIG. 25**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
*Uprooted Order, Series 3, No. 1, 1997*  
Vegetable color, dry pigment, watercolor, and tea on wasli paper  
6 7/8 x 3 3/8 inches  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of Joseph Havel and Lisa Ludwig, 2003.728



**FIG. 26**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
Still of *Apparition, 2023*  
Augmented reality experience  
The augmented reality experience is provided by Snap and built by AR studio MousePack.



**FIGS. 18-20**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
Stills from *Reckoning, 2020*  
HD video animation with sound; music by Du Yun, animation by Patrick O'Rourke  
4 minutes, 17 seconds  
Collection the artist, courtesy Sean Kelly



**FIG. 27**  
Shahzia Sikander  
(American-Pakistan, b. 1969)  
Still of *Apparition, 2023*  
Augmented reality experience  
The augmented reality experience is provided by Snap and built by AR studio MousePack.



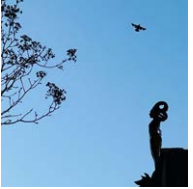
**FIG. 28**  
Photo by Haani Jetha



**FIG. 29**  
Photo by Chris Roque



**FIG. 30**  
Photo by Haani Jetha



**FIG. 31**  
Photo by Atif Toor



**FIG. 32**  
Photo by Haani Jetha



**FIG. 33**  
Photo by Rashmi Gill



**FIG. 34**  
Photo by Lynda Churilla





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