

ZAHRAH EHSAN



MISHA JAPANWALA



CANVAS

GALLERY

SOFT CARTOGRAPHIES

22 April - 1 May 2025

MISHA JAPANWALA



Profile

Misha Japanwala (b. 1995) is a Pakistani artist and fashion designer, whose work is rooted in the rejection and deconstruction of shame attached to one's body, and discussion of themes such as bodily autonomy, gender based violence, moral policing, sexuality and censorship.

Speaking to the objectification, commodification and control exerted on marginalized bodies by societies and systems enveloped in patriarchy, Misha's work aims to create a new historical record and documentation of people — one that is on our own terms, and rooted in honesty, resistance and hope.

Through molding the body to create casts that are worn as sculptural garments, Misha's artistic practice blurs the lines between fashion and fine art, clothing and nudity, and asks viewers to see the body exactly as it is. Her practice is an insistence for bodies to occupy physical space, emphasizing the notion that our bodies shouldn't need to prove anything other than being allowed to simply exist.

Misha's calligraphic work takes the form of silhouettes of the body intertwined with Urdu script - often in an effort to reclaim words and ideas that are used as weapons of shame and control.

Misha has exhibited work in Pakistan and the US. Her work is part of the permanent collection at The Tang Museum as well as numerous private collections around the world. Her work has been photographed for and written about in various international publications including The New York Times, Vogue, The Guardian, The Washington Post and Document Journal. Misha's pieces have been worn by people such as Cardi B, Lupita Nyong'o, Lil Nas X and Joy Crookes. She was an honoree on the Forbes Under 30 list in 2021, and on the Dazed 100 list in 2024.

Misha was raised in Karachi, Pakistan. She received a BFA in Fashion Design from Parsons School of Design in 2014, and is currently based between Karachi and New Jersey, where she lives with her husband, and puppy Snug The Joiner.

Her work continues to be an explorative, radical and shameless celebration of people and their bodies.

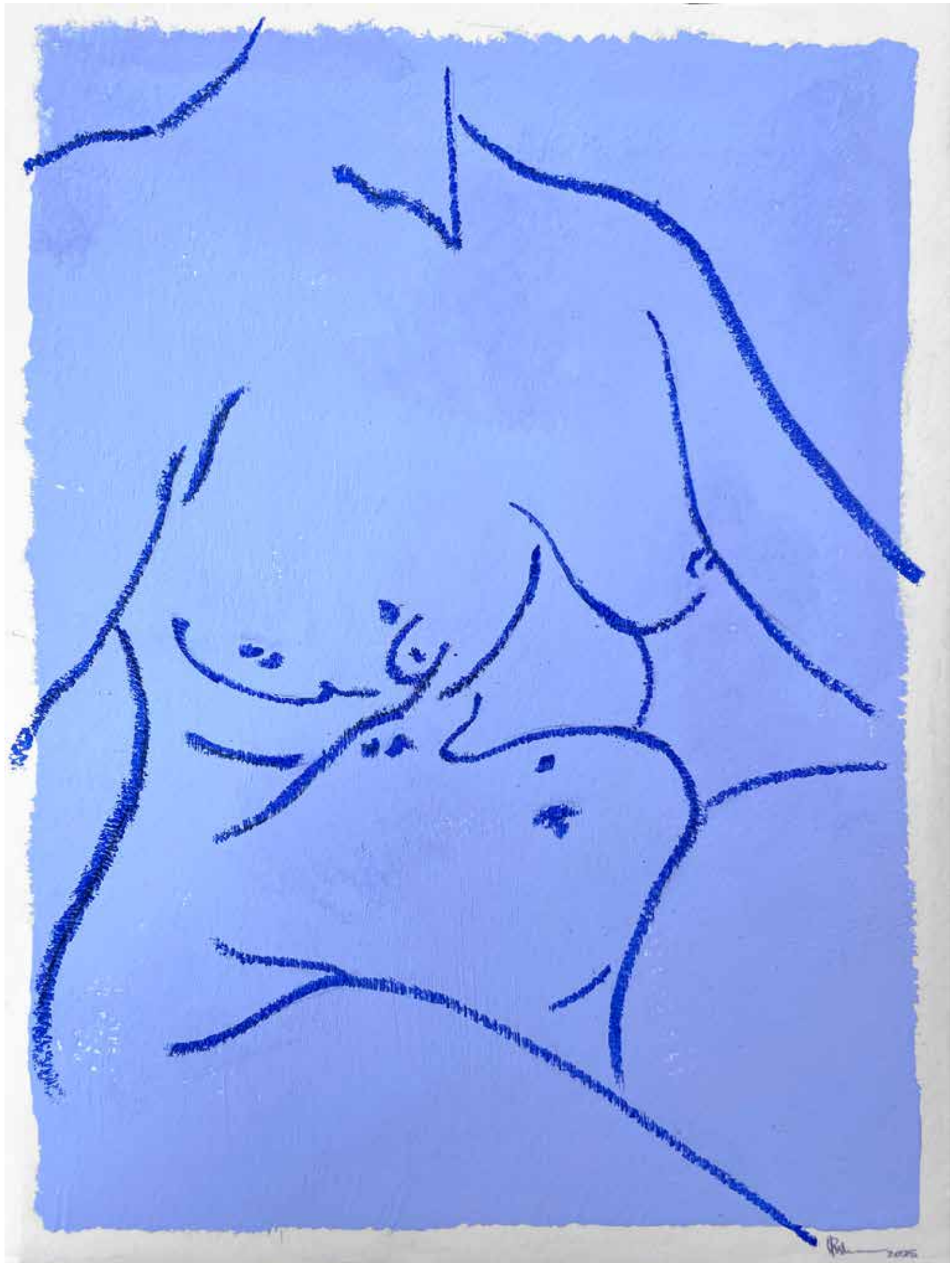
Artist statement

Bodies reimagined as landscapes: dynamic and shifting natural formations. These new works are a continuation of my series 'Topographies', in which bodies are cast and abstracted - embracing lumps, rolls, folds and crevices as celebrations of form, texture and colour.

Drenched in bright, saturated colours, these works command attention to parts of the body that are usually shamed, smoothed over and suffocated. They offer a vision of ourselves that is joyful, leisurely and playful. I named the sculptures in this series after geological formations - while variations of our bodies are often described in terms that criticize and scrutinize, land formations are neutral in their difference, and often praised for the great diversity of the earth. In thinking of the land and body as one, I ask us to rethink our relationship to bodily topographies, and to consider them with the same care and wonder as we do topographies on land.



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Beghairat Figure Study III
Year: 2025
Medium: Acrylic gouache and oil pastel on paper
Size: 12 x 9 inches



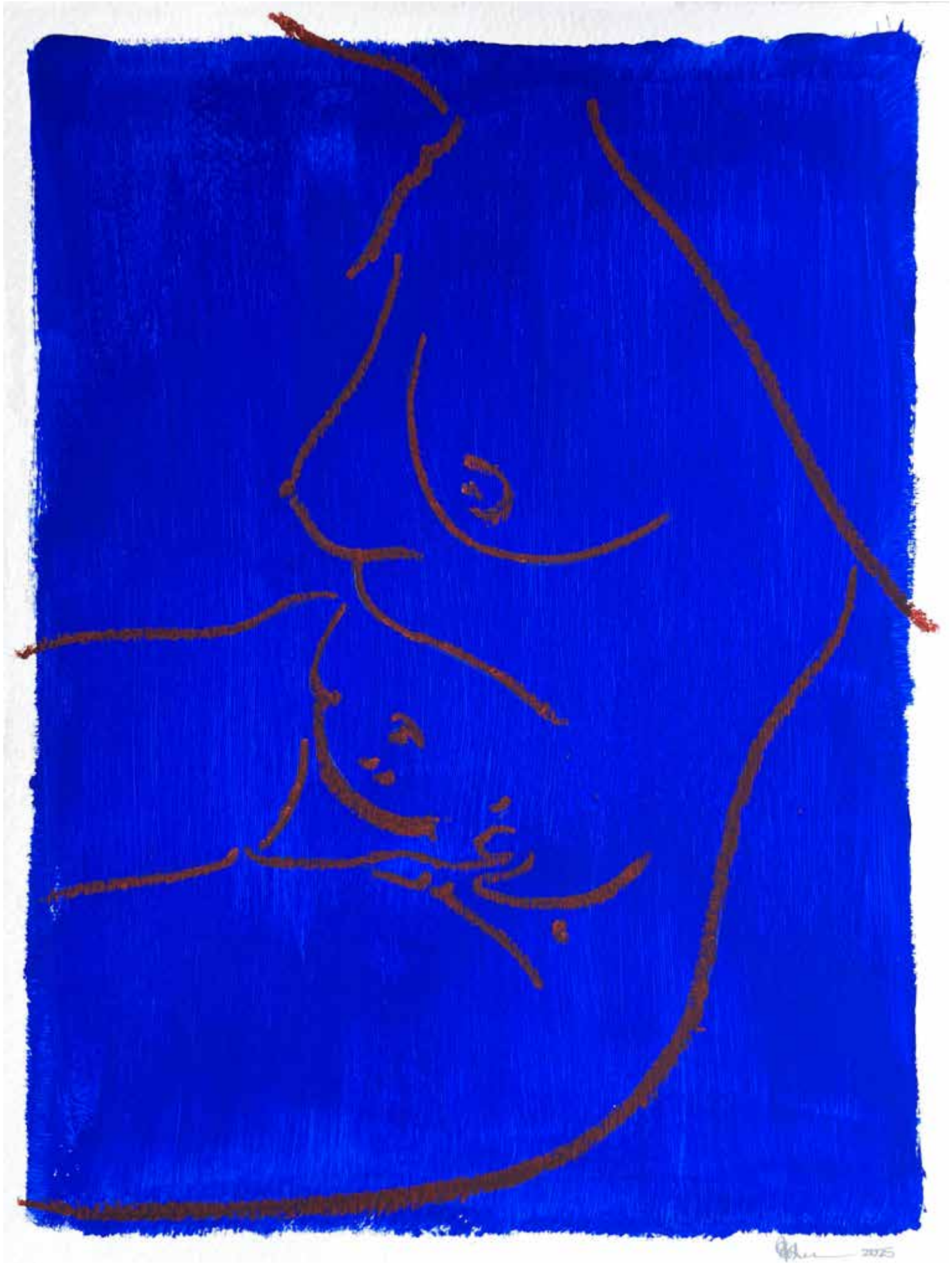
Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Beghairat Figure Study IV
Year: 2025
Medium: Acrylic gouache and oil pastel on paper
Size: 12 x 9 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Beghairat Figure Study V
Year: 2025
Medium: Acrylic gouache and oil pastel on paper
Size: 12 x 9 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Beghairat Figure Study VI
Year: 2025
Medium: Acrylic gouache and oil pastel on paper
Size: 12 x 9 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Beghairat Figure Study VII
Year: 2025
Medium: Acrylic gouache and oil pastel on paper
Size: 12 x 9 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment I
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 16 x 12 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment II
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 16 x 12 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment III
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, silver metal coating
Size: 16 x 12 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment IV
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 16 x 12 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment V
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 16 x 12 inches



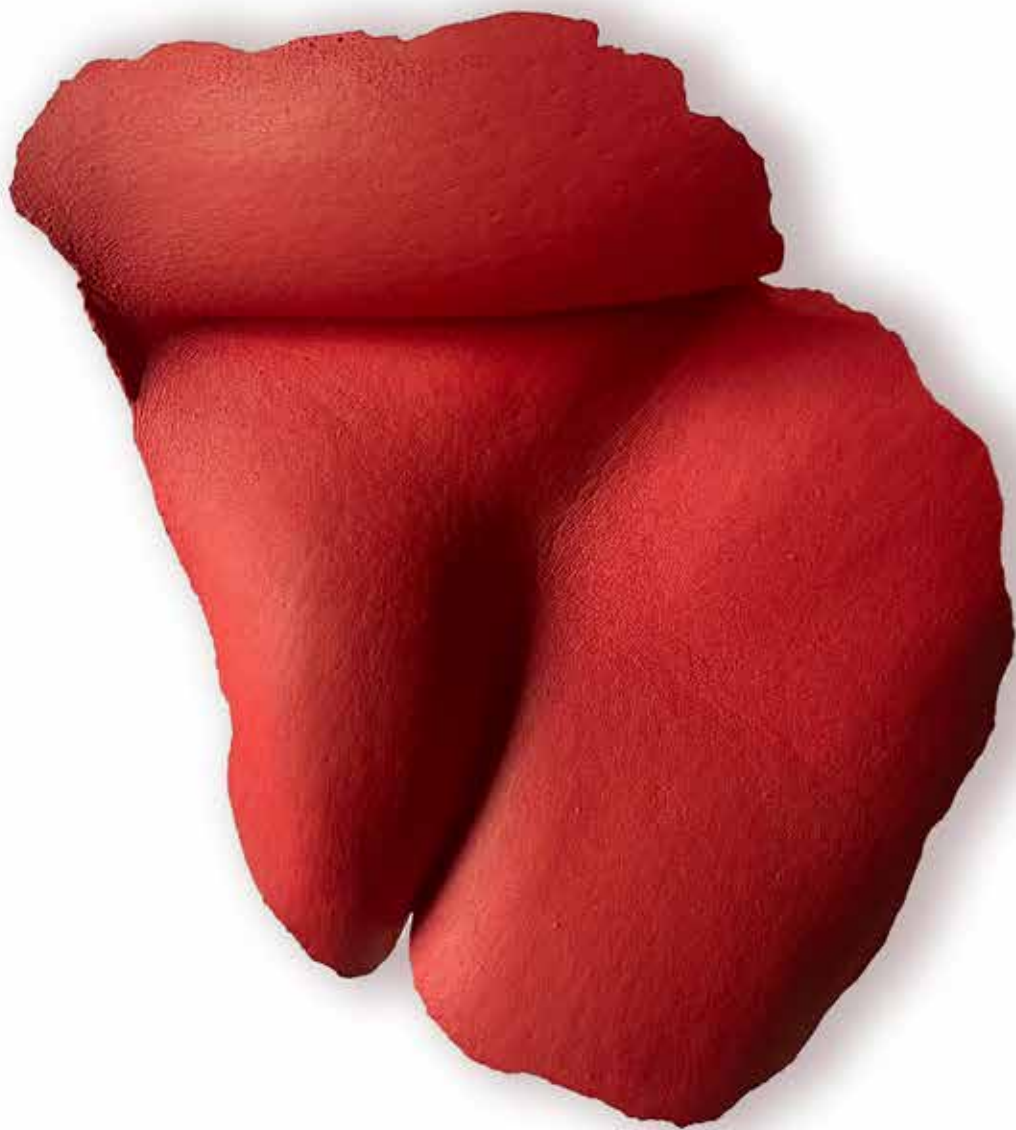
Artist: Misha Japanwala

Title: Fragment VI

Year: 2025

Medium: Resin, brass metal coating

Size: 16 x 12 inches



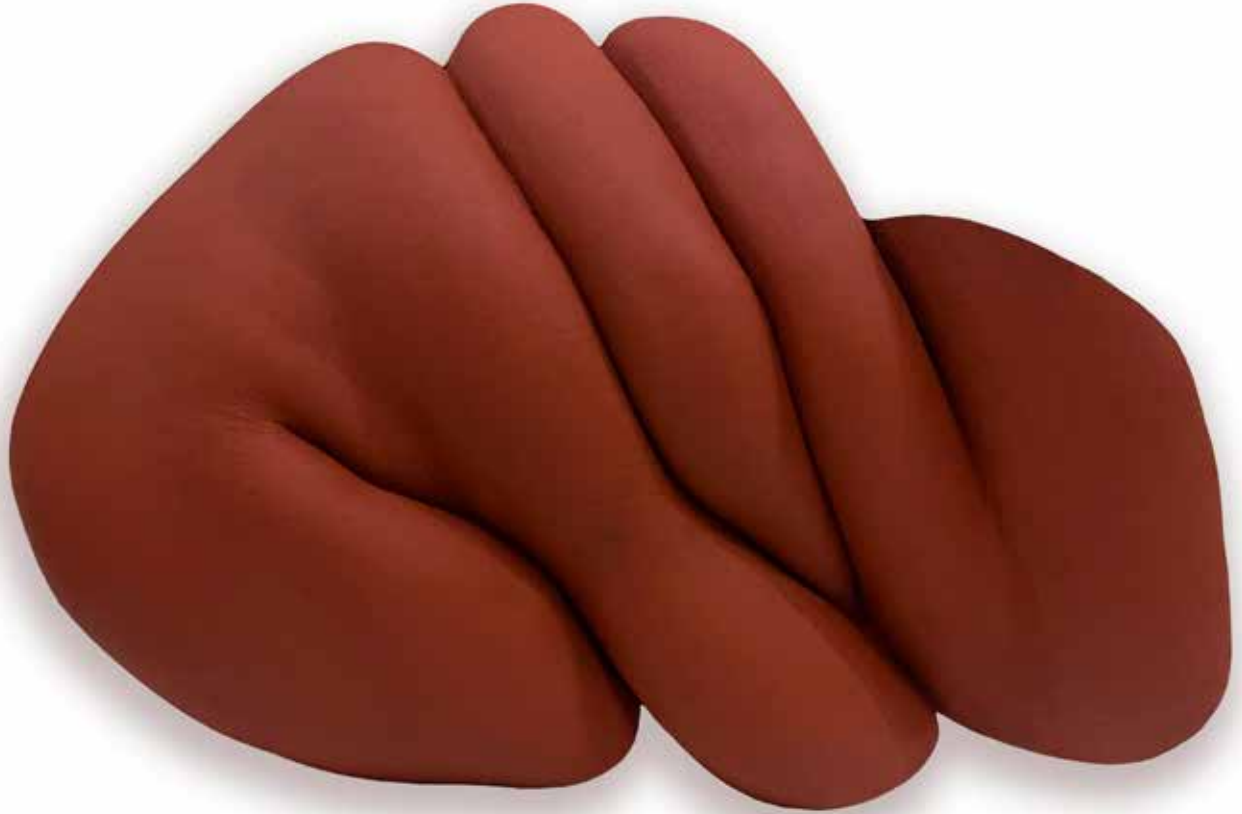
Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Fragment VII
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 16 x 12 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Grassland
Year: 2025
Medium: Resin, turf
Size: 20 x 16 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Bight
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, brass metal coating
Size: 3 x 10 x 11 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala

Title: Canyon

Year: 2024

Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache

Size: 3 x 17 x 13 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Cave
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, brass metal coating
Size: 6 x 14 x 9 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Glacier
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, silver metal coating
Size: 3 x 11 x 13 inches



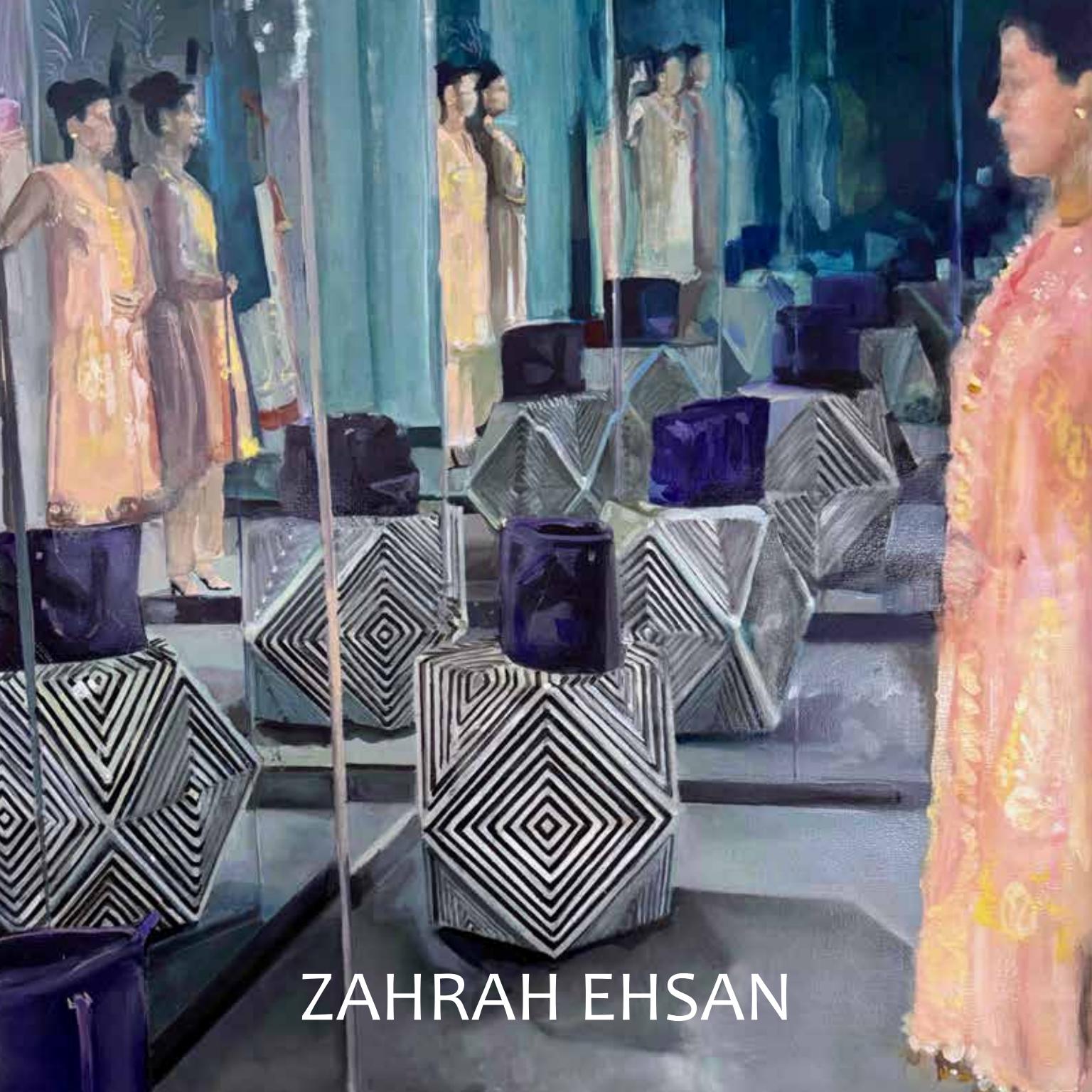
Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Gully
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 3 x 7 x 11 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Meander
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 3 x 10 x 10 inches



Artist: Misha Japanwala
Title: Oasis
Year: 2024
Medium: Resin, acrylic gouache
Size: 3 x 13 x 12 inches



ZAHRAH EHSAN

Profile

Zahrah Ehsan (c.1988) is a Pakistani visual artist, filmmaker, curator, and art educator.

In 2020, she completed her Master of Arts in Visual Cultures and Curating in Contemporary Arts from Aalto University, Finland. Following her graduation, she participated in the Academy of Moving People and Images in Helsinki, completing a filmmaking program from 2021 to 2022.

She earned her Bachelor's of Fine Arts with Honours in 2012, with a concentration in painting at the National College of Arts, Pakistan. She has designed and taught studio and theory-based courses, including painting, drawing, and fine art seminars at NCA for four years. Her practice is deeply experimental including scavenged materials from industry, popular culture, and utility; incorporating it into her paintings, moving images/video-art and on-site installations - mostly critiquing on the notions of gender, identity, mental health, and everyday labour.

She currently lives and works in Dallas, USA.

Artist statement

These paintings and drawings stem from the series called Body as Home, a metaphorical concept that places my physical self at the epicenter of my artistic practice. The body, an unchanging constant amidst the ever-changing backdrop of countries and cultures-like in Finland, Pakistan, and now the United States-becomes the vessel through which I convey the autobiographical motifs that resonate deeply within me. These motifs touch on unresolved concerns of gender, adaptation, identity, and mental health. In Body as Home, my physical form transcends its tangible presence, becoming both a symbol of the self and a home I carry within me.

Rooted in the tension between movement and stillness, the works in oil painting and drawings on paper invite the viewer to explore how presence lingers, how space holds memory, and how the self quietly shifts within it all.



Artist: Zahrah Ehsan

Title: 9.8.2022 at 14.05, Espoo - Finland (I)

Year: 2024 - 25

Medium: Pencil and charcoal on hahnemühle paper

Size: 11 x 15 inches



Detail



Artist: Zahrah Ehsan

Title: 9.8.2022 at 14.05, Espoo - Finland (II)

Year: 2024 - 25

Medium: Pencil and charcoal on hahnemühle paper

Size: 11 x 15 inches



Detail



Artist: Zahrah Ehsan

Title: 9.8.2022 at 14.05, Espoo - Finland (III)

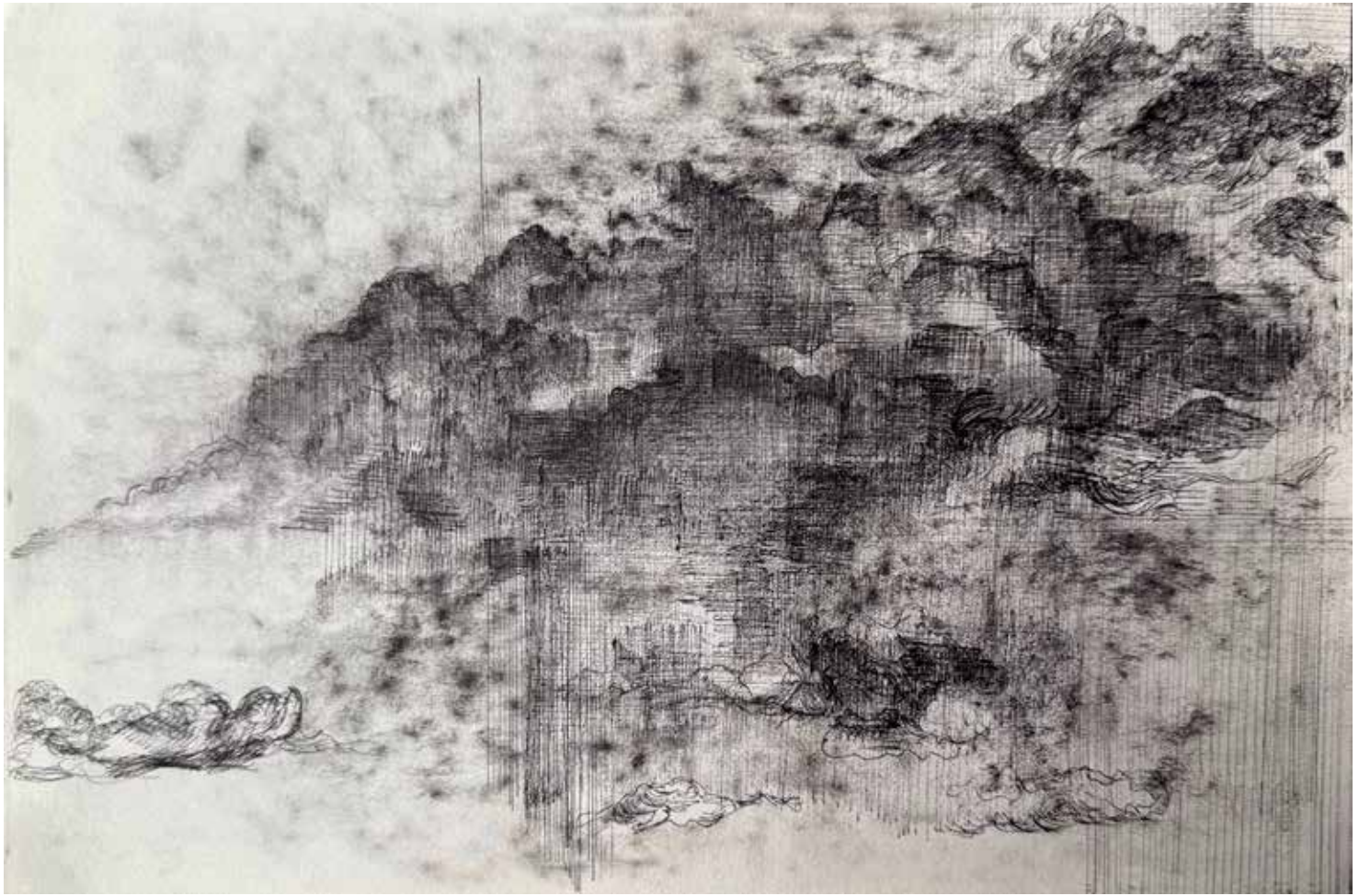
Year: 2024 - 25

Medium: Pencil and charcoal on hahnemühle paper

Size: 11 x 15 inches



Detail



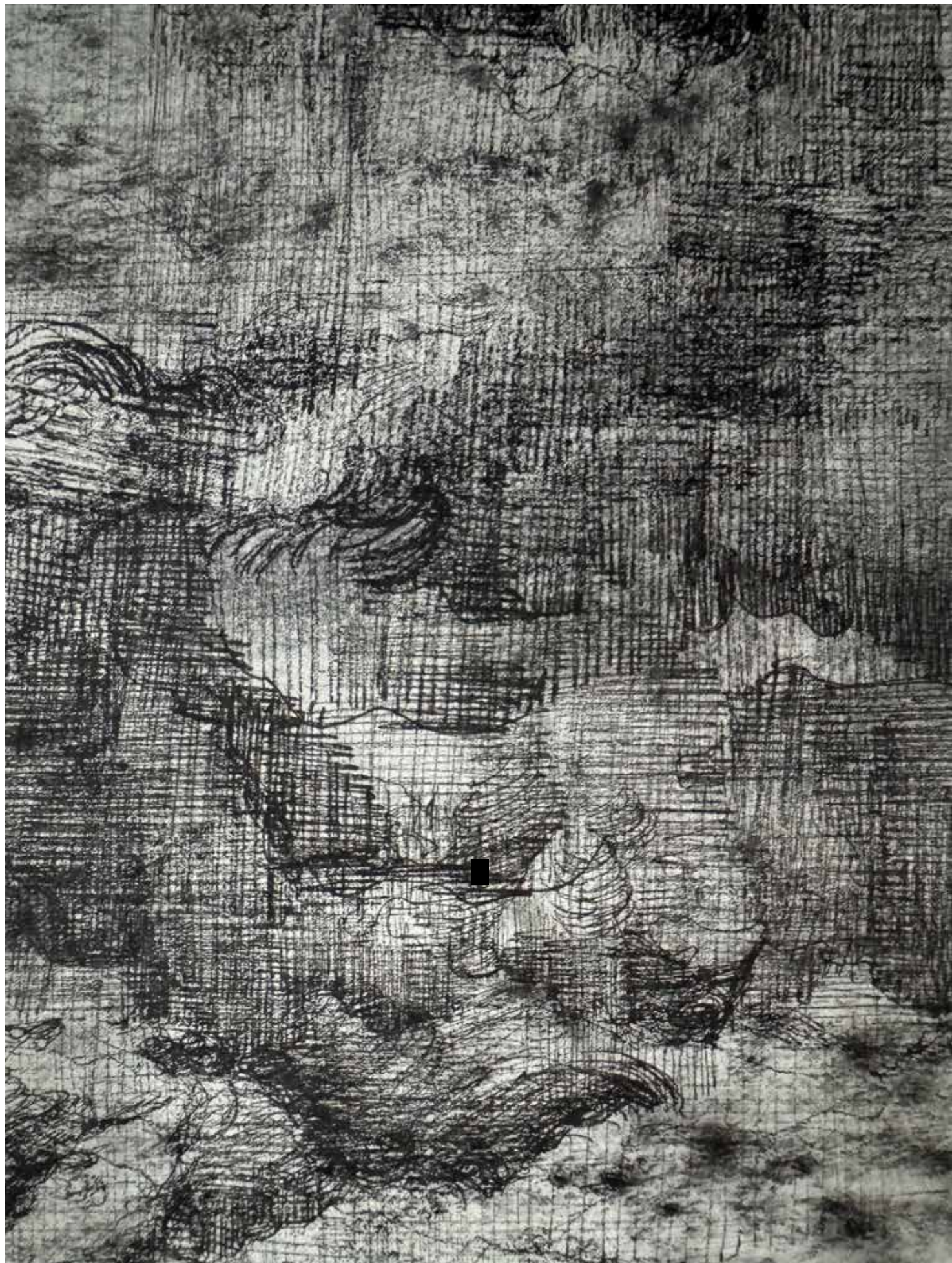
Artist: Zahrah Ehsan

Title: Finnish Sky

Year: 2024 - 25

Medium: Pen and pencil on hahnemühle paper

Size: 11 x 15 inches



Detail



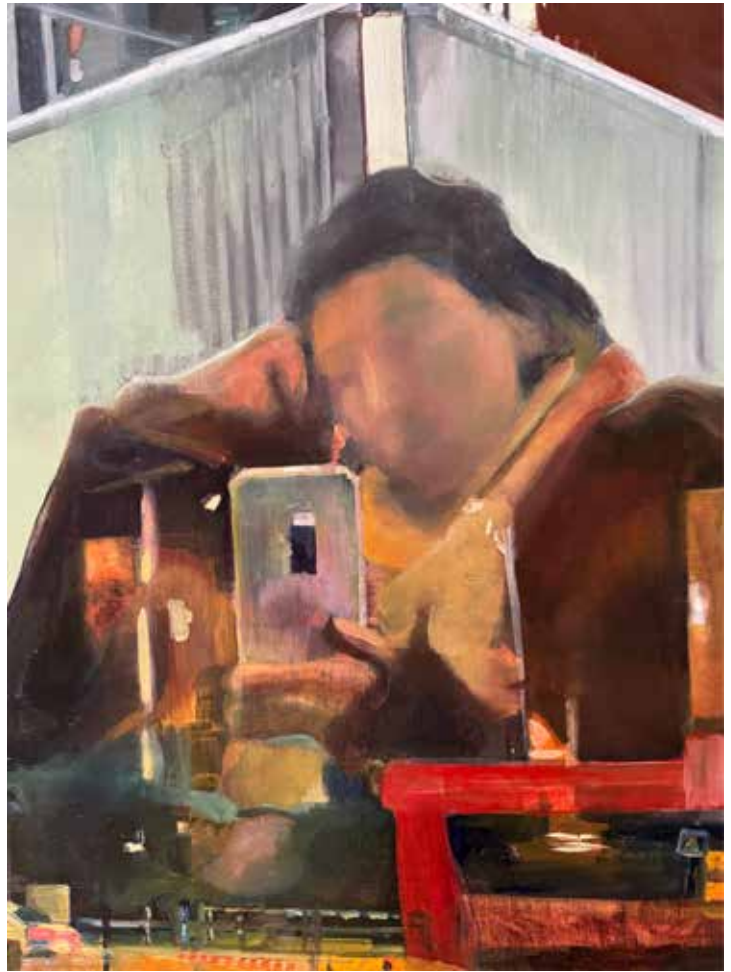
Artist: Zahrah Ehsan
Title: 11 PM Day - July 1, 2021, Espoo, Finland
Year: 2024 - 25
Medium: Oil on canvas
Size: 48 x 36 inches



Detail

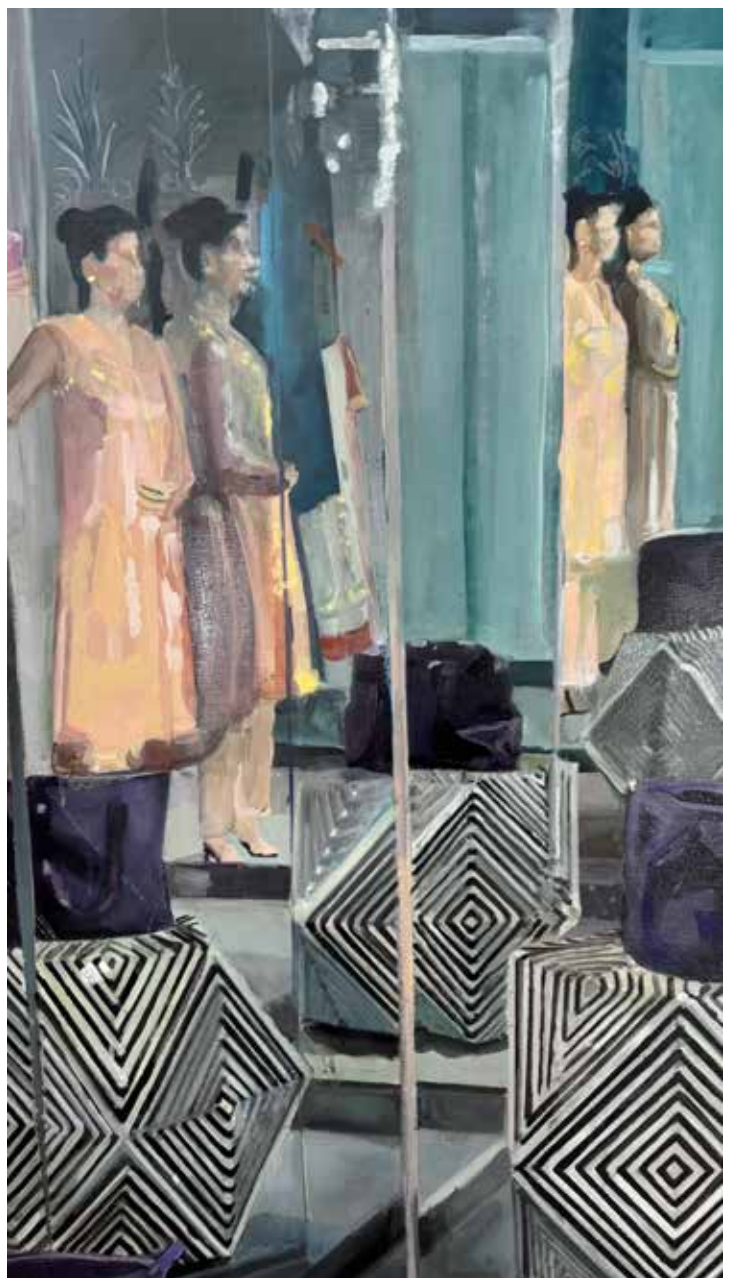


Artist: Zahrah Ehsan
Title: February 26, 2020, Finland
Year: 2024 - 25
Medium: Oil on canvas
Size: 48 x 42 inches





Artist: Zahrah Ehsan
Title: Fitting Room - December 3, 2023 Gulberg, Pakistan
Year: 2024 - 25
Medium: Oil on canvas
Size: 48 x 36 inches



Detail

Misha Japanwala

Education

2018 Parsons School of Design, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Fashion Design

Awards

2021 Forbes, 30 Under 30 Asia, The Arts
2024 Dazed, 100 List

Solo Exhibitions

2024 Topographies, Solo Booth, EXPO Chicago with Hannah Traore Gallery, Chicago, IL
2023 Beghairati Ki Nishaani: Traces of Shamelessness, Hannah Traore Gallery, New York, NY

Group Exhibitions

2024 On Woman Hating, Project For Empty Space, Newark, NJ
2024 The Past Is a Country, RM Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA
2024 Artistic Noise Benefit Auction, Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY
2023 Lion’s Mouth, O Art Space, Lahore, Pakistan
2023 NYX, Sanat Initiative, Karachi, Pakistan
2023 Corporal. Natural. Celestial, Alex Slato, Miami, FL
2023 Really From, NYC Culture Club, New York, NY
2023 Body Ecologies, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2023 Reexamine Retrace 2.0, O Art Space, Lahore, Pakistan
2022 Who Is An Artist? VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2022 Hues, Hannah Traore Gallery, New York, NY
2021 Windows Open To The Sky, Artemide, New York, NY
2019 Microcosm 3 AAN Gandhara Art Space, Karachi, Pakistan
2018 Gaze, The Faraar Gallery at T2F, Karachi, Pakistan

Select Press

2024 Washington Post | Why Women Are Making Nude Casts of Their Bodies
2024 Galerie | 6 Stand Out Artists at Expo Chicago
2023 New York Times | A Pakistani Artist Reimagines Her Relationship with Shame and Bodies
2023 The Guardian | The Pakistani Artist Celebrating Femme Bodies
2023 ArtForum | Critics’ Picks
2023 Artsy | 10 Must-See Shows
2023 CNN | Lupita Nyong’o’s Disarming Silver Breastplate
2023 Huffington Post | Lupita Nyong’o Stuns in ‘Shameless’ Silver Breastplate at The Tony Awards
2023 Artnet | 10 Exhibitions to See
2023 Artsy | South Asian Artists Addressing Migration Through New Artifacts
2023 Vogue India | Misha Japanwala’s Debut Solo Show Uses Breastplates to Archive the Resistance of Pakistani Activists
2023 Elle | Pakistani Artist Misha Japanwala Gets Real About Shame
2023 Document Journal | Misha Japanwala Wants You to be Without Shame
2023 Elephant | Misha Japanwala Creates for a New Millennium
2023 HypeArt | Misha Japanwala Creates Casts of the Human Body as an Act of Resistance and Resilience
2023 i-D | Misha Japanwala is Reclaiming the Meaning of Shame
2022 CFDA | How Misha Japanwala’s Sculptural Designs Caught the Industry’s Attention
2022 Elle India | Changing The Narrative: These South Asian-Origin Women Are Forces To Reckon With
2022 Vogue India | Artist Misha Japanwala on the Feminist Politics of Her Famous Breastplates
2021 i-D | The Breastplate Designer Who Caught Gigi Hadid’s Eye
2021 Vice News | Why This Artist Who Sculpted Cardi B’s Pregnant Body Gets Hate
2021 Vogue | Designer Misha Japanwala Is Never Fully Dressed Without a Breastplate

Select Print Editorials

2023 Dazed Magazine, Winter 2023 Issue
2022 Document Journal, Cover Story, 10th Anniversary Issue
2022 L’Officiel Brasil, June/July 2022 Issue
2022 Vogue CS, Cover Story, June 2022 Issue
2022 AnOther Magazine, Spring/Summer 2022 Issue
2022 Vogue India, March 2022 Issue
2021 Elle Canada, May 2021 Issue
2020 Allure Magazine, September 2020 Issue
2020 V Magazine, Gigi Journal Volume II
2019 Phosphenes, Issue 7
2019 Vogue Russia, March 2019 Issue
2018 Vogue Spain, August 2018 Issue

Notable Commissions

Lupita Nyong’o, Tony Awards
Cardi B, Pregnancy Announcement
Cardi B, Rumors Music Video
Joy Crookes, Skin Album Cover
Lil Nas X, Montero Album Artwork
Gigi Hadid, Gigi Journal for V Magazine

Notable Acquisitions

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, NY

Zahrah Ehsan

Education

2021-22	Filmmaking - Academy of Moving People and Images - Helsinki, Finland
2018-20	Aalto University - Espoo, Finland
	Masters of Arts in Visual Cultures, Curating and Contemporary Arts
2009-12	National College of Arts - Lahore, Pakistan
	Bachelors of Fine arts in Painting

Solo Exhibition

2021	Window-less views, Myymälä2 Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
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Group Exhibitions

2024	Small Works - Kaleido Kontemporary, Lahore, Pakistan.
2021	My Childhood – Annantalo Art Centre/City of Helsinki, Culture and Leisure, Advancement of Culture in collaboration with Catalysti Ry, Helsinki, Finland
2021	RAW - Relational Art Week Festival, Myymälä2 Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
2021	1 MIN 100 YRS an immersive on-site video installation - COMO (Contemporary/Modern) Museum of Art, Pakistan
2020	I had to speak to myself. Again. - To Sing Like a City Bird Sings -Pori Biennale 2020, Pori, Finland
2020	Painting a picture, Poimu Mixtape 2020, Poimu-Feminist and Anti-Racist Studio Space, Helsinki, Finland
2019	A State of Flesh, Väre - Aalto University of Arts, Design and Architecture, Espoo, Finland
2019	How Can We Keep The Chaos, ACUD Macht Neu, Berlin, Germany
2018	Histories in the Present, Väre - Aalto University of Arts, Design and Architecture, Finland.
2018	Un-Thinking 2-Person Show, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2018	River In An Ocean - Collateral Event of LB01, Lahore Biennale 01, Lahore, Pakistan
2017	Five Sides of a Square, Canvas Gallery, Karachi
2017	Of Other Spaces, at an abandoned house in Lahore, Pakistan
2017	This Tiny Garden That We Tend, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
2016	Monochrome Monologue, The Paint Bucket, Lahore, Pakistan
2015	Till Human Voices Wake Us, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2015	Parvaaz, Studio Seven Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2015	A Contemporary Art Experience, by Canvas Gallery, Mohatta Palace, Karachi, Pakistan
2014	As Time Goes By..., My Art World Gallery, Islamabad
2014	Presence of Absence, Full Circle Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2013	Welcome to Pink, BFA Degree Show, National College of Arts, Lahore
2013	New Romantic, Rohtas Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
2013	In Search of Ground, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
2013	Limbs - Anatomy of Images, Attic Studio, Al Hamra Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
2011	Correspondence, Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore (a collaborative project involving 13 students each from University of Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA and National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan)
2010	Open Studio, Attic Studio, Al Hamra Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan

Film Projects

2021-22	Short film "Footnotes on an arranged meeting" (Director, Actor and Scriptwriter)
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Film Festivals

2023	Screening at Divvy Film Festival 2023, Lahore, Pakistan
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Grants

2022	Avek Scriptwriting for a short film (3 months), Finland
2022	Taike/ Korona grants for artists and professionals in the cultural and creative fields (2 months to work), Finland
2021	Taike / Korona grants for artists and professionals in the cultural and creative industries (3 months of work), Finland
2021	Taike / Corona grants for individuals (2 months to work), Finland

Residencies

2022	3rd Artist Residency at INKSTER PRINTMAKING STUDIO (in collaboration with Shakir Ali Museum), Lahore, Pakistan
2020	Platforms - Artist Residency at Vaasa, Finland
2017	Vermont Studio Centre, Vermont, USA

Curatorial Projects

2021	Window-less views, Myymälä2 Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
2020	Futures in process: Of sites rendering speculation - A curatorial project by students of ViCCA (Visual cultures, curating and contemporary art), Department of Art, Aalto University
2020	Salon Gathering - Museum of Impossible Forms, Kontula, Finland
2019	A State of Flesh, Väre - Aalto University of Arts, Design and Architecture, Espoo, Finland
2017	Of Other Spaces, At an abandoned house in Lahore, Pakistan
2017	This Tiny Garden That We Tend, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore
2016	Forty One - Second Year Fine Arts Exhibition, Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore
2015	Till Human Voices Wake Us, Canvas Gallery, Karachi
2013	Limbs - Anatomy of Images, Attic Studio, Al Hamra Art Gallery, Lahore
2013	In Search of Ground, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore
2011	Correspondence, Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore (a collaborative project involving 13 students each from University of Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA and National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan)

Podcasts

Platform X MIF Podcast series - Vaasa/Helsinki, Finland

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