

CANVAS  
GALLERY

# Body Ecologies

Curated by Aziz Sohail

Bibi Hajra  
Marium Habib  
Misha Japanwala  
Sanié Bokhari  
Sophia Balagamwala

21st February – 2nd March 2023

## Curatorial Note

### Body Ecologies

Where are you now as you read this? What would it take for you to pause? To breathe free? To imagine your own self and how it has moved to be here? What obstacles came in your way, and how was your journey made smoother? What bodies did you encounter, and how did your own body make itself possible / impossible?

Within this particular moment of policing, surveillance, violence, assault and protest, how may we honour, affirm, and imagine the (non-normative) body as it exists and moves in and against the world?

Body Ecologies presents five artistic positions probing, investigating and revealing the relationship of the body as manifested with the conditions that surround it. How may it present itself within a landscape, bending it to its will, submitting to it and breaking free?

Two previous exhibitions inspire and formulate the thinking of this project, itself an incomplete and investigation-in-progress. The first, *Writing Bodies*, initiated by my professor Litia Perta, which took place in 2015 at the Elizabeth Foundation of the Arts in New York, which presented propositions about 'bodies writing, of bodies being written, of writing bodies, of bodies being read, unread, of bodies yet unwritten'. The second departure point is the exhibition *Soft Bodies*, organised by Sophia Balagamwala in 2018 at IVS Gallery in Karachi, a presentation of artists 'who speak about bodies that do not always fit, that cannot and should not fit in the spaces that currently exist for them.'

We are here again.

An increasing visibility and presence of female and trans bodies amidst a proliferation of organising and collectivity has led to an intense backlash. Within this moment, how may we hold space for community and belonging? In this particular moment of the body simultaneously being unfree and free, how may we sit with this tension and paradox?

Sophia Balagamwala and Bibi Hajra are departure points to these questions through particular investigations into both our pre-colonial and colonial pasts which inform our present. In the works of Balagamwala, the figure of the general, a masculine subject, is central with its powerful and dominating imagery. This object and source of power and the way it dominates our national discourse is queered and reformulated – a form of taking back control and asserting agency.

Bibi Hajra, on the other hand, flips the gaze towards those who make possibilities within the shrine of Bibian Pak Daman, and the power associated with their presence. Her rich, detailed paintings and her quick sketches convey epic stories and are full otherwise worlds in and of themselves. The work itself, originally conceptualised for a mural associated with the renovation of the shrine and then shelved, is a reminder of which bodies and stories are made visible and allowed and which are rendered unseen.

Through these two inheritances, which are pathways into our contemporary Pakistani present, we may be able to delineate more personal stories as embodied by the works of Marium Habib and Sanie Bokhari – both through a local and diasporic experience. Bokhari meditates on the presumed binaries between the female body in Western vs non Western frameworks. In her work, she blurs the supposed difference of experience in these contexts. Habib's rich, vivid paintings centre the noncisgender, non-male body and their capacity to exist and be visible in their own context.

We end with the works of Misha Japanwala, for whom her own body becomes a medium and material of making. Japanwala has been engaged in a longer term project of sculpting, shaping and moulding bodies – her own as well as her friends, family and people from her broader community. Within this exhibition she turns the gaze inwards, to herself, exploring her own body as it changes across time and space. In this exhibition, she reclaims the word *fahaash*, a word commonly used to police and shut down expressions and displays of the body online and in public space.

Taken together, these five practices act in concert to reveal tension points between pasts, presents and futures and the way the body has and continues to move across time and space.



Bibi Hajra

## Artist Statement

The act of *Jharookashi* (sweeping the floor) takes Shazia into a 'state'. Although in a way, this state is permanent (as described by her) it is not always visible to me. Like most other *jharookash*, she does not demand the status that comes with this beautiful act of *jhrookashi*.

She gives herself a title, but no one else can give her attributes or assign roles and nothing in particular is imputed to her personality. It is difficult to describe her movements within the space of Bibian Pak's shrine. She does not initiate conversations but she participates with her presence. She nods when she agrees and grins when she disagrees. Her eyes sparkle a lot. The one moment where she revealed something about herself was when she took over Yusuf's attempt at assembling a *jharoo* (broom). Also a *jharookash*, he was doing a fine job, or so I thought, until she grinned and simply told him to move aside. He stepped back and both of us watched her in awe, as she smoothly twirled the thin bamboo blades into a solid *jharoo*. In the movement of her arms and hands, one could see a skill mastered and passed over generations. The love, skill and tenderness with which the system works at the level of the *jharookash* in the shrine of Bibian Pak Daman is what makes the saints' home so welcoming for her lovers.

It is within this universe of everyday practices and "religious" rituals that another world is simultaneously created. It is an imagined world of the workers, visitors and devotees of the shrine--a world produced through imaginative storytelling, through the recitation of *noha* and *marsiya* and through the production and circulation of various material objects and crafts of devotion.

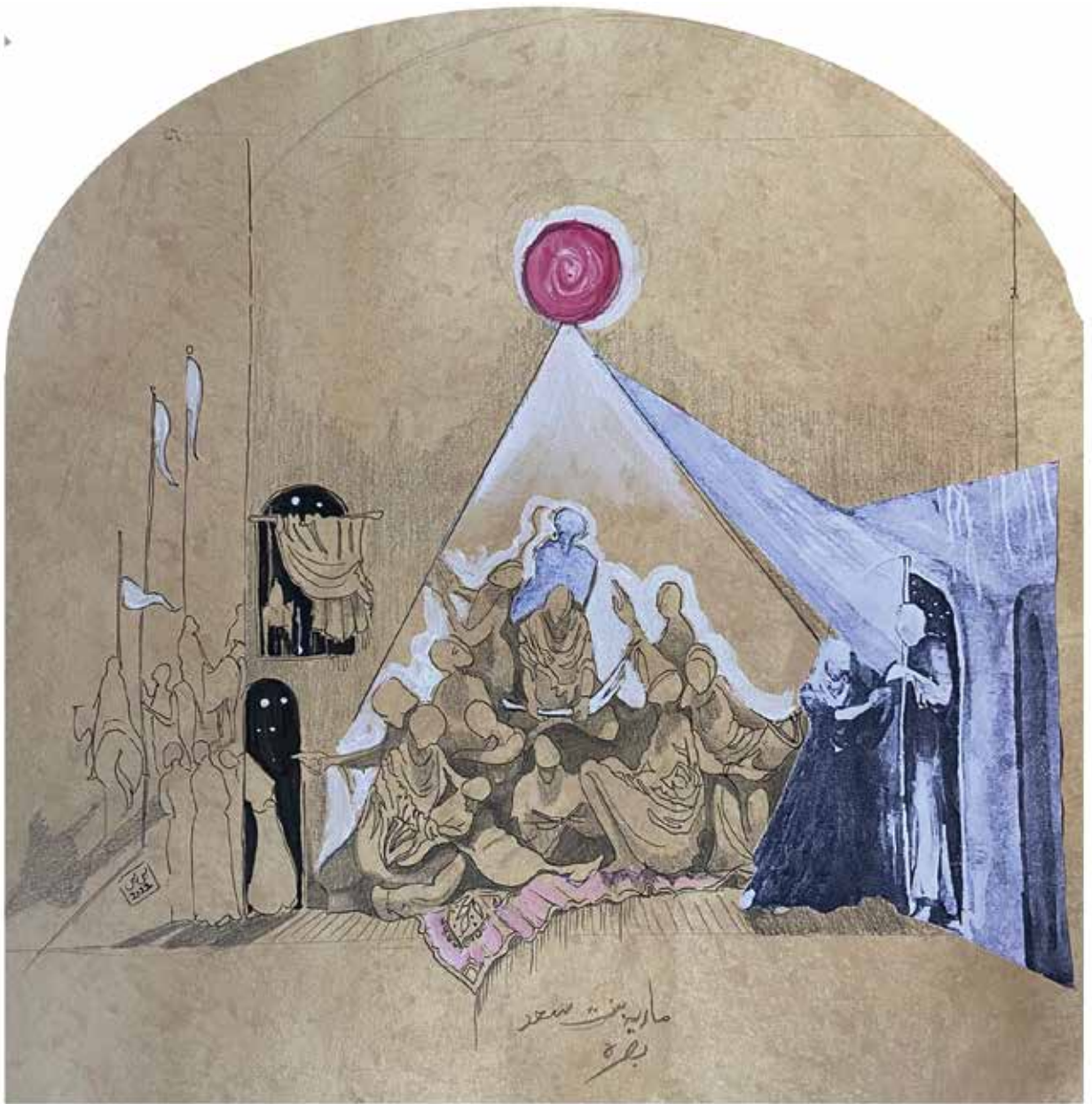
My work within this exhibition shows these two intertwined worlds - the lived everyday and the spectacular, imagined world of the female lovers of the saint. Both keep the memory of the saint alive. The two paintings and the rough sketches on display were initially commissioned by the architecture firm currently renovating the shrine building. These ultimately did not make it on the walls of the shrine and exist in the form of painted drafts, ideas and sketches that reveal the direct impact of yet another world. This is a world that is constructed and conceived by those in power, continuously transforming and shifting the relational dynamics of the space by implementing new rules and design aesthetics for the physical space.



Title: Mural I  
Medium: Gouache on Paper  
Size: 66 x 44 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Mural II  
Medium: Gouache on Paper  
Size: 17 x 23 Inches  
Year: 2022



Title: Sketch I (Maria Bint Saad, Planning of a Revolution)

Medium: Gouache and Graphite on Coffee Stained Paper and Collage

Size: 18 x 18 Inches

Year: 2022



Title: Sketch II (Weaving Stories, IIm)

Medium: Gouache and Graphite on Coffee Stained Paper and Collage

Size: 13 x 20 Inches

Year: 2022



Title: Sketch III (The Death of a Mother)

Medium: Gouache and Graphite on Coffee Stained Paper and Collage

Size: 11.5 x 20 Inches

Year: 2022



Title: Sketch IV (At the Gate of Bibian Pak Daman)

Medium: Gouache and Graphite on Coffee Stained Paper and Collage

Size: 8.5 x 20.5 Inches

Year: 2022

## Profile

Bibi Hajra's work focuses on many structural themes but often from the viewpoint that the most effective way of revealing complex ideas is through satire, using a gendered lens and through depictions of ordinary stories from ordinary places. Bibi Hajra received her Bachelor's degree in Architecture from the National College of Arts, Lahore. She then did her masters in urban studies from an Erasmus Mundus scholarship program. Working as an architect, a teacher and a visual artist based in Lahore, she addresses themes such as urban segregation and development, and recently religious symbolism/aesthetics and the city. For the last two years her work has focused on a prominent shrine of a female saint in Lahore, Bibian Pak Daman, documenting and depicting the lives of women devotees and the various narratives of the saint Bibi Ruqqaiya that are shared within that space.

## EDUCATION

- 2017 Masters, Urban Studies.  
Erasmus Mundus Scholarship, 4 Cities Program, A consortium of 6 Universities, Europe.
- 2013 Bachelors in Architecture (Hons.)  
National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2012 Summer School, "Stories From the City"  
Architecture Association School of Architecture, London, UK

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2016 Winner for competition 'Where the Bus Stops'. Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF), Lahore.
- 2014-15 Erasmus Mundus category A scholarship for two years Masters.
- 2013 Graduated with Honors, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2010 Awarded Rubens Trophy, NASA convention, Chennai, India

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Group Exhibition, 'Body Ecologies', Canvas Gallery, Karachi (Curated by Aziz Sohail)
- 2023 Group Exhibition, 'Walk Amongst Trees', Koel Gallery, Karachi (Curated by Zahra Khan)
- 2022 Group Exhibition, 'Let there Be Night', VM Art Gallery, Karachi (Curated by Mallika Rangoonwala)
- 2022 Group Exhibition, 'The Unwritten', Satrang Gallery, Islamabad (Curated by Zahra Khan)
- 2021 Group Exhibition, 'As We Are', Dominion Gallery, The Colony Lahore, Pakistan (Curated by Usman Ahmed)
- 2021 Group Exhibition, 'Improvising Rhetorics', The Roadside Art, Lahore
- 2021 Group Exhibition, 'People and Banyan', Thx Again Berlin, Karl Marx Allee, Berlin, Germany (Curated by Benjamin Merten and Zara Sajid)
- 2020 Group Exhibition, 'Karachi Ki Khoj (Re)defining the Metropolis', IPAF Show, NED University, Karachi (Curated by Sophia Balagamwala)
- 2020 Group Exhibition, 'A Sight for a Site', Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF), Lahore, Pakistan (Curated by Rameesha Azeem)
- 2019 Group Exhibition, 'Crossovers', Alhamra Art Gallery, Mall Road, Lahore, Pakistan (Curated by Asim Raza)
- 2019 Solo Exhibition, 'Dhaak Kay Teen Pat' (Three Leaves of the Dhaak Tree), Lahore University of Management Sciences. LUMS, Lahore (Curated by Dr. Saba Peerzada)
- 2019 Group Exhibition, 'Development Induced Displacement', Lahore Management University, LUMS Lahore (Curated by Hala Bashir)
- 2018 Group Exhibition, 'Soft Bodies', Indus Valley School of Architecture Gallery, Karachi (Curated by Sophia Balagamwala)
- 2018 Group Exhibition. Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), Islamabad
- 2018 Group Exhibition, London Art Fair, London (Curated by Zara Sajid)
- 2018 Two Person Exhibition, 'City of Dreams and Nightmares', Alhamra Art Gallery, Mall Road Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan

## COMMISSIONS

- 2022 Protest Art, Aurat Azadi March, Main Poster, Islamabad
- 2019 Public Art, Community Wall Mural, E Block Quarters.

## PUBLICATIONS AS AUTHOR

Co-author (with Dr. Amen Jaffer) of research-based book chapter "Production of Muslim Space: Celebrating the Prophet in Pakistan's Urban Neighborhoods" in a volume edited by Istvan Keul (University of Bergen, Norway)

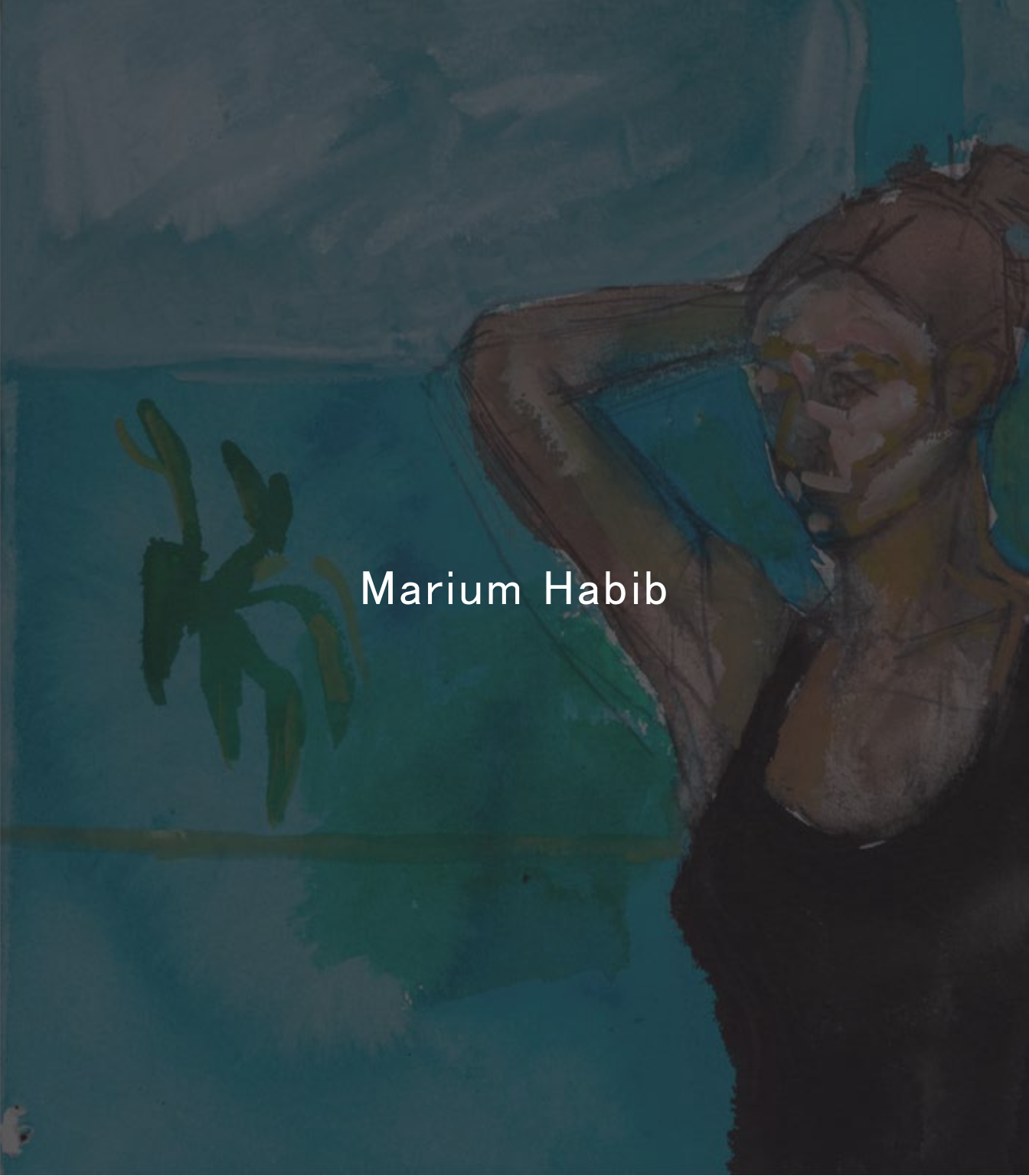
## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Architecture and Design Teacher

COMSATS University, Lahore, Pakistan

2018–2020

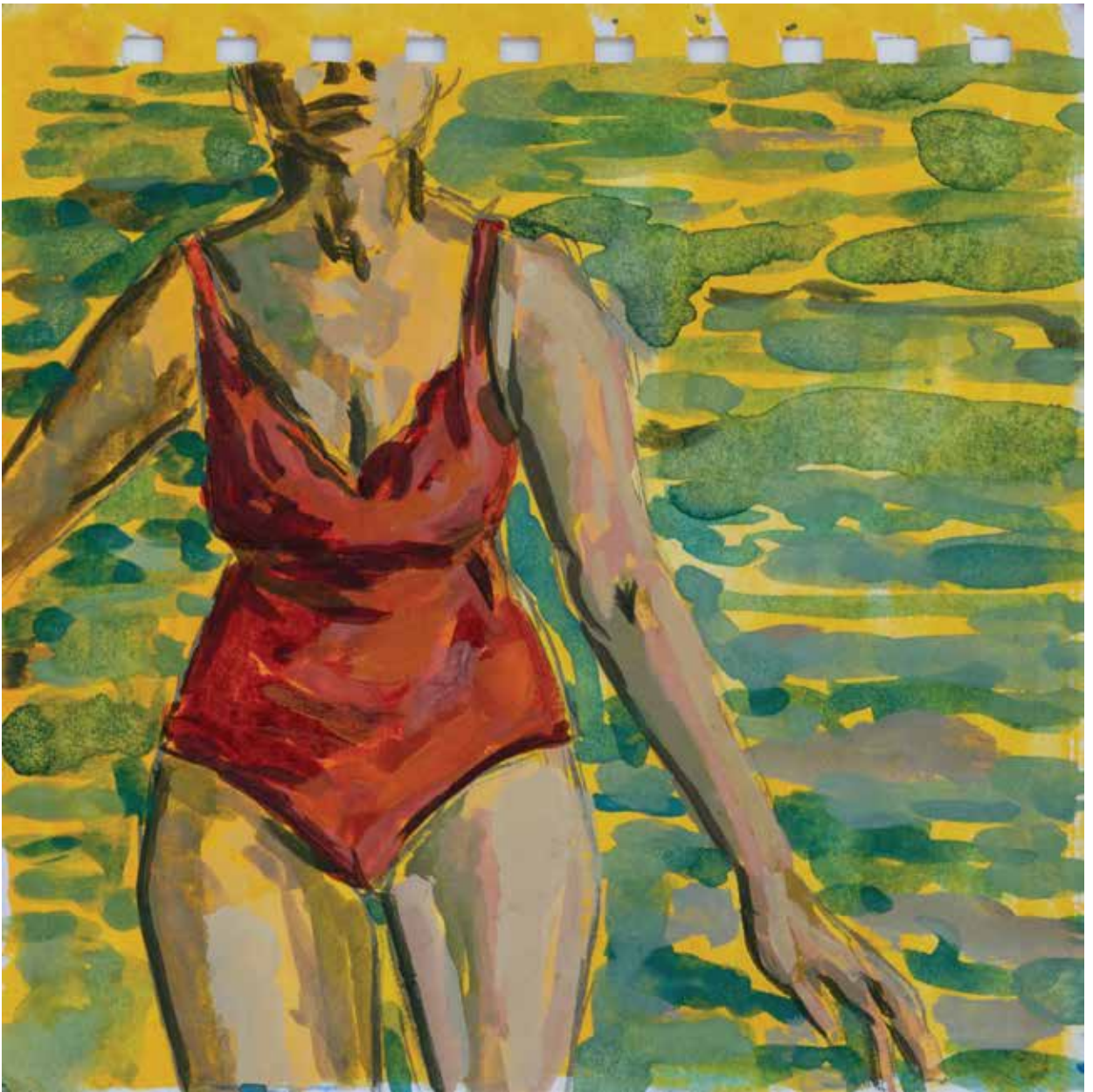
- Taught 4th year studio classes to groups of 15 to 40 students for two years.
- Taught urban theory to 3rd and 4th year students for two years.
- Supervised a group of 6 thesis year students for one year.



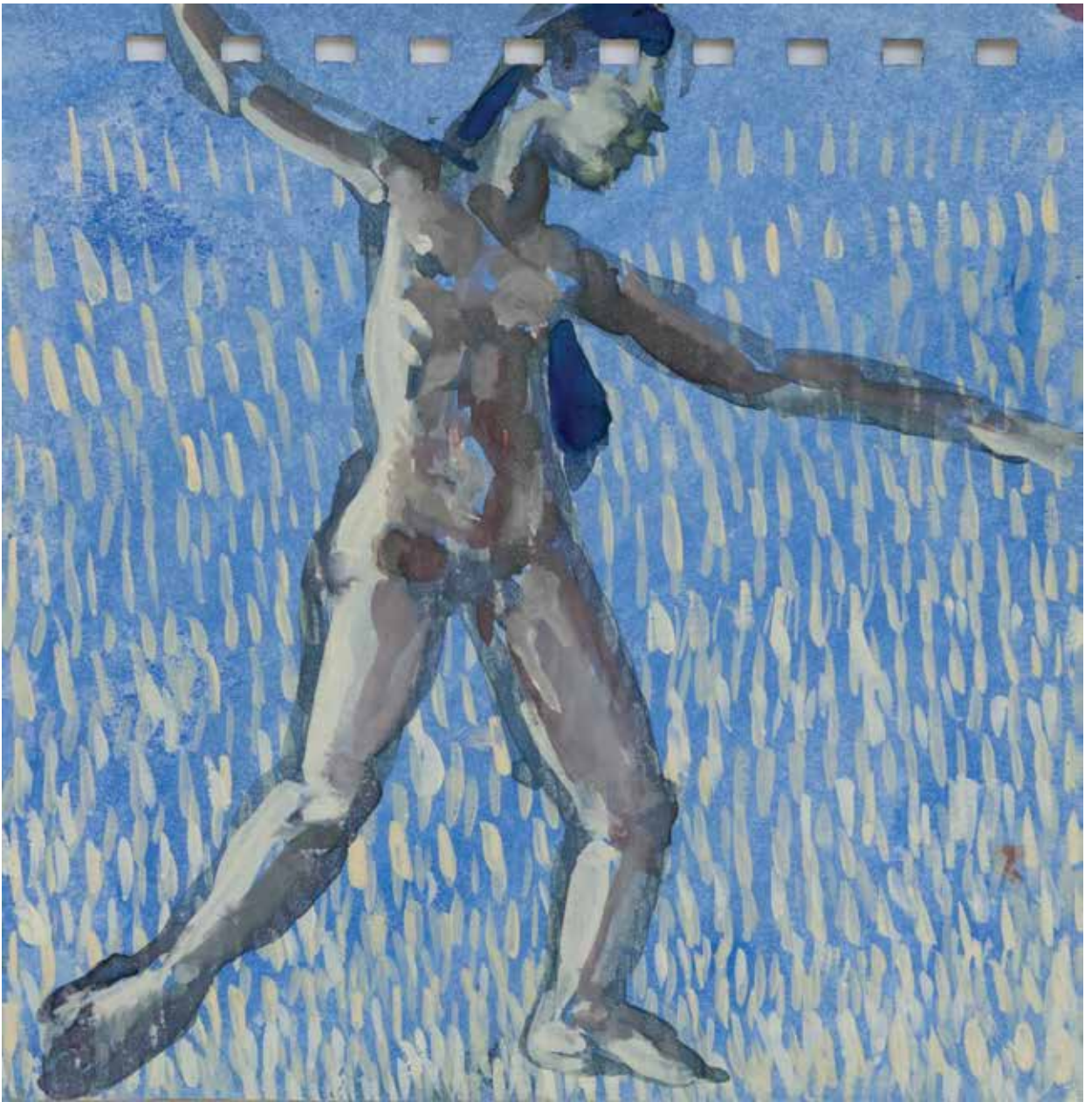
Marium Habib

## Artist Statement

My rejection of ornamental tropes of the female body is fuelled by my anatomical curiosity and desire for psychological expression. I paint from photographs and treat the body as a landscape to map subjectively. Abstractions, gestures and body language are my cartographic tools. Coming from an environment where bodies that aren't cisgender male bodies are not tolerated in public spaces, I find that depicting them is my freedom and rebellion. What is considered trivial in western art history becomes a novelty when taken so far out of context. Our relationships with our own bodies has never been straightforward and rendering the body in oil paint, chalk pastel and water based mediums has been my way to think through lived experiences.



Title: Pink Swimsuit  
Medium: Gouache, Ink and Watercolour on Paper  
Size: 6 x 6 Inches  
Year: 2020



Title: Dancing in the Rain  
Medium: Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
Size: 6 x 6 Inches  
Year: 2020



Title: Languishing Woman  
Medium: Pencil on Paper  
Size: 11.5 x 8 Inches  
Year: 2021



Title: Like a Seashell  
Medium: Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
Size: 11.5 x 8 Inches  
Year: 2020



Title: Fixing Hair  
Medium: Gouache, Ink and Watercolour on Paper  
Size: 14.5 x 10 Inches  
Year: 2018



Title: Reclining Figure  
Medium: Gouache, Ink and Watercolour on Paper  
Size: 13.5 x 12.5 Inches  
Year: 2017



Title: Just Talking  
Medium: Chalk Pastel on Paper  
Size: 60 x 96 Inches  
Year: 2021

## Profile

Marium M Habib (b.1993) is a visual artist from Karachi. She received her BA in painting from Wimbledon College Of Arts, University of the Arts London in 2018. Habib began exhibiting in 2016 in London and has since been showing regularly in Pakistan, including a solo show at Artchowk the Gallery in Karachi. She has recently had her work exhibited in Barcelona, Spain. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Painting at the Slade School of Fine Art at University College London.

## EDUCATION

- 2022-24 MFA, Painting, SLADE SCHOOL OF FINE ART, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, UK
- 2015-18 BA, Fine Art: Painting, WIMBLEDON COLLEGE OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON, UK
- 2012-13 BARD COLLEGE, NY, USA 2012-2013

## EXHIBITIONS

### SOLO SHOWS

- 2019 COLOSSUS & FRIENDS, Art Chowk the Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan

### GROUP SHOWS

- 2023 WALK AMONG TREES, Koel Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2022 HOME GROUND, Artchowk the Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2022 BEYOND THE LAND, Muse Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2022 SPRING HAS SPRUNG, Dominion Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan.
- 2022 ON PAPER, Plataforma 2, Barcelona, Spain.
- 2022 WHO IS AN ARTIST? VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2022 WHAT IS A GOOD PAINTING? Art Chowk The Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2021 FIGURE IT OUT by The Neulinge Collective, Lewisham Arthouse, London, UK,
- 2021 AATH PEHAR, Full Circle Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2021 EXOTIC HOLIDAY, Art Chowk the Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2020 RED MAGIC, Karachi House, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2020 BODY MEMORIES, Art Chowk the Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2020 LET THE GRASS GROW BENEATH YOUR FEET, Trinity Art Gallery, London, UK
- 2019 REHAI, VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2019 MICROCOSM 3, Gandhara Art Space, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2019 ESCAPE: THE ART COLLECTION, Chawkandi Art, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 2018 WIMBLEDON COLLEGE OF ARTS DEGREE SHOW, Wimbledon College of Arts, London, UK.
- 2018 NEULINGE, The Crypt Gallery, London, UK.
- 2018 INTERIM SHOW, Wimbledon College of Arts, London, UK.
- 2017 CONTEMPORARY FIGURATIVE PAINTING, Wimbledon Space, London, UK.

### ART FAIRS

- 2016 MONIKER ART FAIR, The Truman Brewery, London, UK.
- 2019 Three-month Artist Residency at Trinity Art Studios in London, UK.

### AWARDS

- 2016 **NOMINATED:** Prunella Clough Promising Painter Award, Wimbledon College of Arts

The background of the image is a dark gray surface with large, expressive black calligraphic strokes. These strokes are fluid and dynamic, characteristic of a style like cursive Arabic or Persian script. Some strokes are thick and bold, while others are thin and delicate, creating a sense of movement and energy. The strokes are scattered across the frame, with some overlapping and others standing alone.

Misha Japanwala

## Artist Statement

Through moulding the body to create casts that are worn as sculptural garments, the work of Misha Japanwala blurs the lines between fashion and fine art, clothing and nudity, inviting the viewers to see the body exactly as it is, in all its complexity and beauty. Her calligraphic work takes the form of silhouettes of the body intertwined with Urdu script — often in an effort to reclaim words and insults that are used as weapons against oneself and the body they inhabit. Her work is thus an explorative, radical and *shameless* celebration of women and their bodies.



Title: Conversations Between My Past, Present & Future Selves I  
Medium: Resin and Patinated Bronze Metal Coating  
Size: 14 x 17 x 3 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Conversations Between My Past, Present & Future Selves II  
Medium: Resin and Patinated Gold Metal Coating  
Size: 21 x 14 x 4 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Conversations Between My Past, Present & Future Selves III  
Medium: Resin and Patinated Copper Metal Coating  
Size: 17 x 13 x 4 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Fahaash I  
Medium: Ink on Paper  
Size: 16 x 20 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Fahaash II  
Medium: Ink on Paper  
Size: 16 x 20 Inches  
Year: 2023

## Profile

Misha Japanwala (b. 1995) is an artist and fashion designer. Trained with a BFA in Fashion Design from Parsons School of Design, her artistic practice is rooted in the deconstruction of shame attached to one's body, and the discussion of themes such as bodily autonomy, gender based violence, moral policing, sexuality and censorship.

Misha has exhibited work in Pakistan and the US. Her work has been photographed for and written about in various international publications including Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Vice and Document Journal. Misha has created pieces for Cardi B, Gigi Hadid, Lil Nas X and Joy Crookes, and was an honoree on the Forbes Under 30 list.

Misha currently lives and works between Karachi, Pakistan and New Jersey, USA. Her debut US Solo will take place in May 2023 with Hannah Traore Gallery.

## **EDUCATION**

2018 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Parsons School of Design

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

2023 Hannah Traore Gallery, New York, NY, USA (Upcoming)

## **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

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, USA  
2019 MICROCOSM 3, AAN Gandhara Art Space, Karachi, Pakistan

## **RECENT PRINT EDITORIALS**

2022 10th Anniversary Issue Cover Story, Document Journal  
2022 Spring/Summer Issue, AnOther Magazine  
2022 Julia Fox Cover Story, Vogue Czechoslovakia  
2022 Spring Issue, L'Officiel Brazil

## **NOTABLE EDITORIAL COMMISSIONS**

2021 Pregnancy Announcement, Cardi B  
2021 Rumors Music Video, Cardi B  
2021 Skin Album Cover, Joy Crookes  
2021 Montero Album Artwork, Lil Nas X  
2020 Gigi Journal for V Magazine, Gigi Hadid

## **HONOURS**

2021 Forbes 30 Under 30 List

## **RECENT SELECT PRESS**

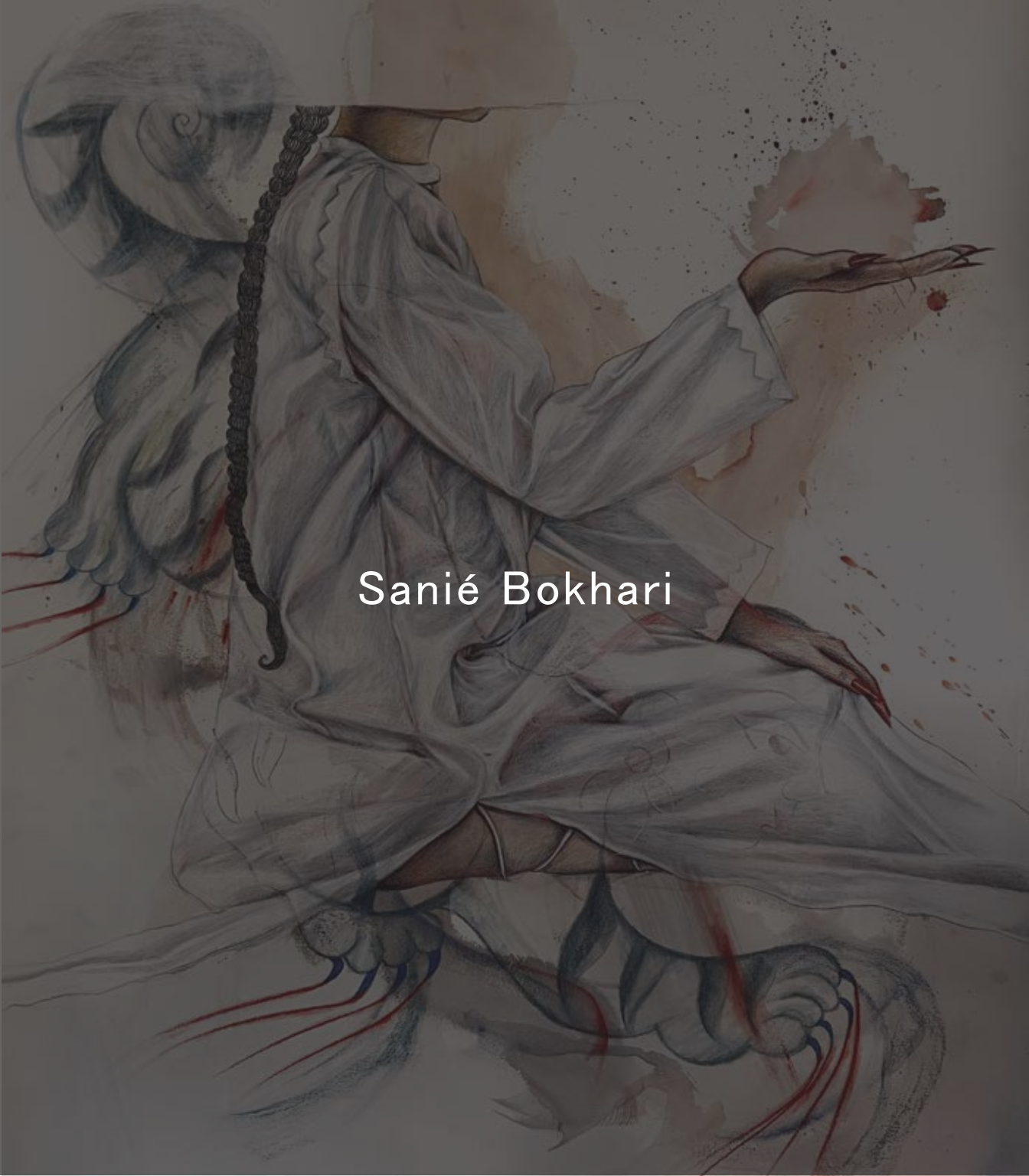
CFDA: How Misha Japanwala's Designs Caught The Industry's Attention  
<https://cfda.com/news/how-misha-japanwalas-sculptural-designs-caught-the-industrys-attention>

VOGUE India: Artist Misha Japanwala on the Feminist Politics of her Famous Breastplates

<https://www.vogue.in/culture-and-living/content/artist-misha-japanwala-feminist-politics-gold-breastplates>

Vice News: Why This Artist Who Sculpted Cardi B's Pregnant Body Gets Hate  
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/wx5pqz/cardi-b-pregnant-misha-japanwala>

VOGUE: Designer Misha Japanwala Is Never Fully Dressed Without a Breastplate  
<https://www.vogue.com/article/designer-misha-japanwala-interview>



Sanié Bokhari

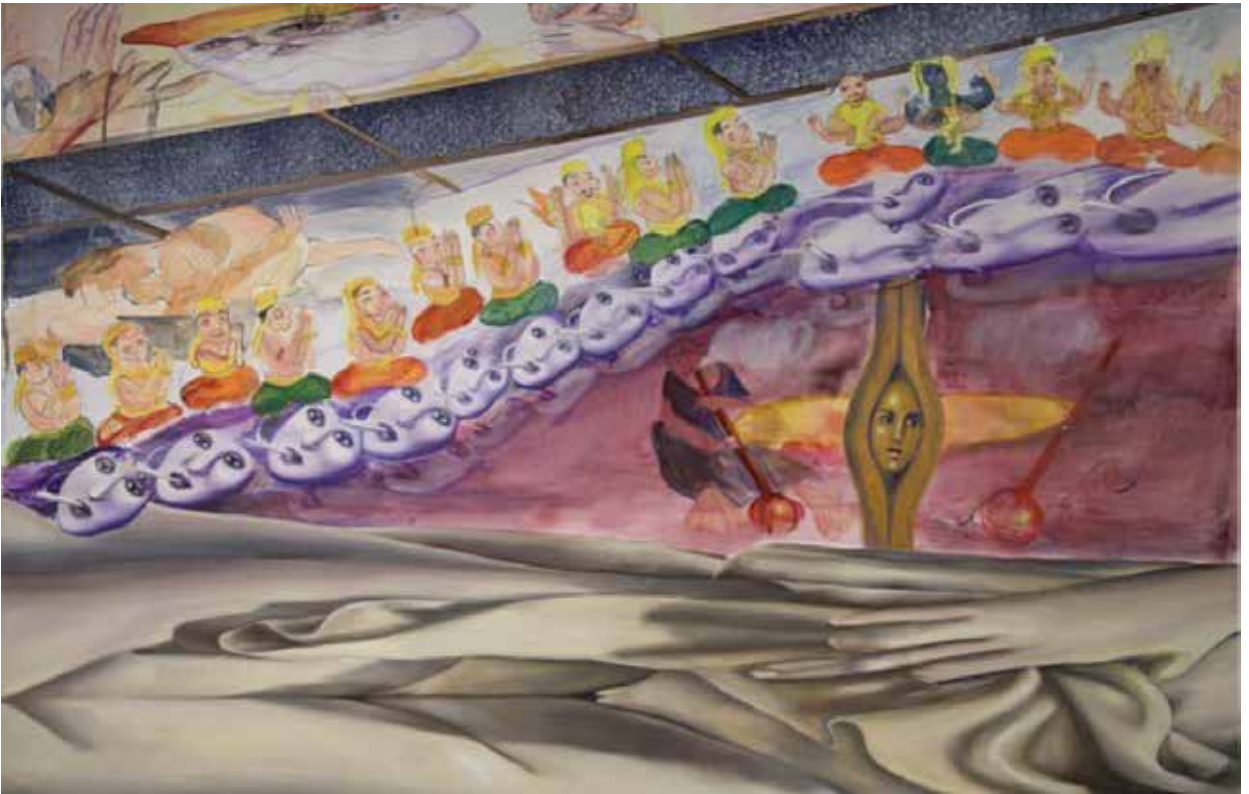
## Artist Statement

My work reveals the persistence of patriarchal standards globally through an exploration of cultural differences in gender across oceans. My compositions depict the disorientation and transformation of ethnic diaspora by using the figurative symbolism of Mughal miniature painting as a lens to view the cross-generational experiences of South-Asian women— all while interrogating the complexities of representation.

The images show the precarious nature of traversing in and out of gendered roles, allowing the viewer to understand the female character as the protagonist rather than a monolithic being. The figures straddle self-actualisation and rage, resulting in a contemporary Judith and Holofernes saga rooted in sub-continental imagery: a roaring flame, a branded sneaker, broad goya-esque brushstrokes harmonising with the textured Mughal painting style of *pardakht*, stylised lotus petals and Indo-Persian swirls.

The work is meant to be seen in conflict: compelling the viewer to contemplate gender through multiple lenses and thus questioning their current understanding of it. I strive to deconstruct the idea of the exclusivity of western feminism and its impacts around the world, specifically in the south. To that end, I invoke spirituality, using religious symbolism, figuration and traditional techniques to subvert patriarchal norms and invite uninhibited female subjectivity. The female in every instance is firmly and powerfully rooted in her body, evoking an otherworldly parallel where the universe finally allows the woman to regain control.

The objective of my drawings, paintings and sculptures is to understand and process the experience of a transnational woman, marked by the history of colonial rule, while grappling with the inherent prejudice and stereotyping that exists in American culture.



Title: The Spot Should Feel Rough, Almost Like the Surface of a Walnut

Medium: Oil and Pencil on Canvas

Size: 48 x 72 Inches

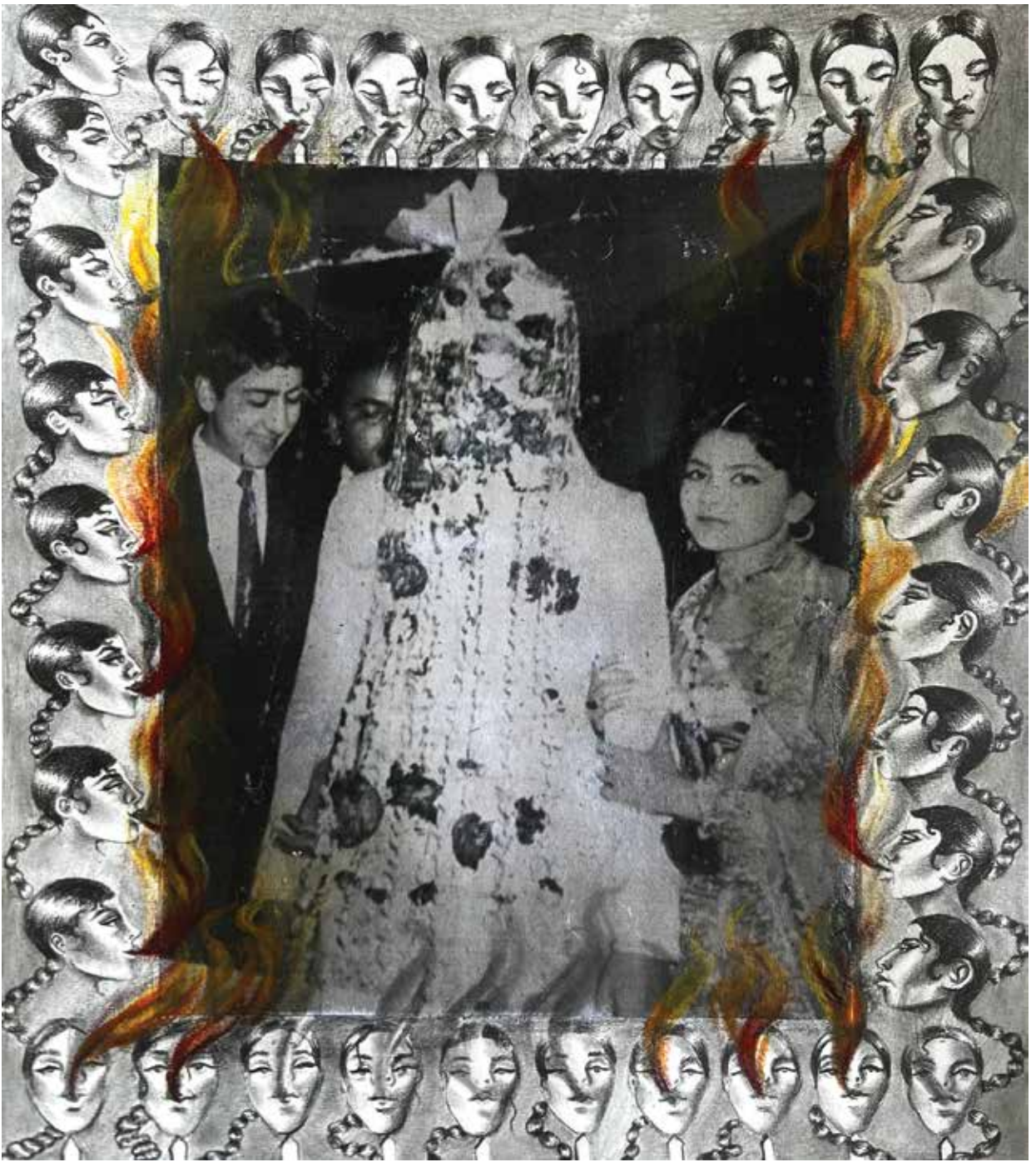
Year: 2018



Title: It's 11:49 Pm Here  
Medium: Oil on Canvas  
Size: 36 x 48 Inches  
Year: 2022



Title: Mirrored Heart  
Medium: Pastel and Acrylics on Paper  
Size: 36 x 48 Inches  
Year: 2022



Title: The Longer I Wait  
Medium: Photo Transfer and Graphite on Paper  
Size: 11 x 8.5 Inches  
Year: 2022

## Profile

Sanié Bokhari (she/her) is a mixed media artist from Pakistan. She holds a Bachelor's in Painting from the National College of Arts, Lahore and an MFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2018. She was the recipient of the President's Scholarship at RISD, and was selected to work with the contemporary art curator at the RISD Museum. She has exhibited her work in numerous shows in Pakistan and the US, including Canvas Gallery in Karachi, Fridman Gallery & Aicon Gallery in NYC. Her residencies include Luton Culture in 2012, Vermont Studio Center in 2015, NARS Foundation in New York in 2018, PLOP residency in London 2019 & Vasl Residency in Karachi in 2020. Her work is included in various publications including The OG Magazine, and G5A: imprint, Mumbai.

## EDUCATION

- 2018 Rhode Island School of Design, USA, MFA Painting, RISD Fellowship
- 2014 National College of Arts, Pakistan, BFA Painting, cum laude
- 2009 GCE Advanced Level, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2007 GCE Ordinary Level, Lahore, Pakistan


## EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Potheads, Swivel Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2023 Borderwalls V, The Border Project Space, Brooklyn, NY
- 2022 Between the Earth and Sky, Martha's Contemporary, Austin, TX
- 2022 Dirty Work, Greenwich House Pottery, NYC
- 2022 The Shilla, Harper's Gallery x The here and there co. Seoul, Korea
- 2022 Alter, 12 Gates Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2022 Worthless Studios Benefit Auction, Artsy, NYC
- 2022 Field Projects Open Studios, NYC
- 2022 Natural Selection, Room 57 Gallery, NYC
- 2021 Far and Familiar, Glass Rice Gallery, San Francisco
- 2021 Free Arts NYC auction, Sotheby's, NYC
- 2021 Judith has arrived, Aicon Gallery, NYC
- 2021 Spring/Break Art Show, NYC
- 2021 Rites of passage, Whitney Centre of the Arts, Massachusetts
- 2021 You make my heart sing, Belowgrand Gallery, NYC
- 2021 Flower of a blue flame, Canvas Gallery, Karachi
- 2020 Young Artists: One, Fridman Gallery, NYC
- 2020 All the women in me, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2020 Spring/Break Art Show, Los Angeles
- 2020 Flat Files, Ortega Y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn, NY
- 2019 Cultural Focus Group, Kunstraum Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2019 It's more about us, Selenas Mountain, Brooklyn, NY
- 2019 PLOP, end of Residency show, London, UK
- 2019 Current, Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2018 Sixteen Memos for the Next Millennium, NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, NY
- 2018 Un-thinking, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2018 Counter Narratives: Geographies of the Unfamiliar, Asya Geisberg, NYC
- 2017 Dismantled, Sol Koffler Gallery, Providence, RI
- 2017 Home is the strongest conjuration, Morgan Lehman Gallery, NYC Residencies
- 2023 Macedonia Institute, NY
- 2022 Field Residency, NYC
- 2020 Vasl Residency, Karachi, Pakistan

2019 PLOP Residency, London, UK  
2019 Bashir Ahmad Studios, Lahore, Pakistan  
2018 NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, USA  
2015 Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, USA  
2012 Luton Culture, Luton, Bedfordshire, UK

## **PUBLICATIONS**

2022 Art Seen: The Curator's Salon Magazine, Fall 2022  
2021 The OG, Edition 3: The Creative Quar-routine issue  
2021 Precog Magazine, NYC: Issue 6  
2020 G5A Foundation for Contemporary Culture, Mumbai, India: Imprint

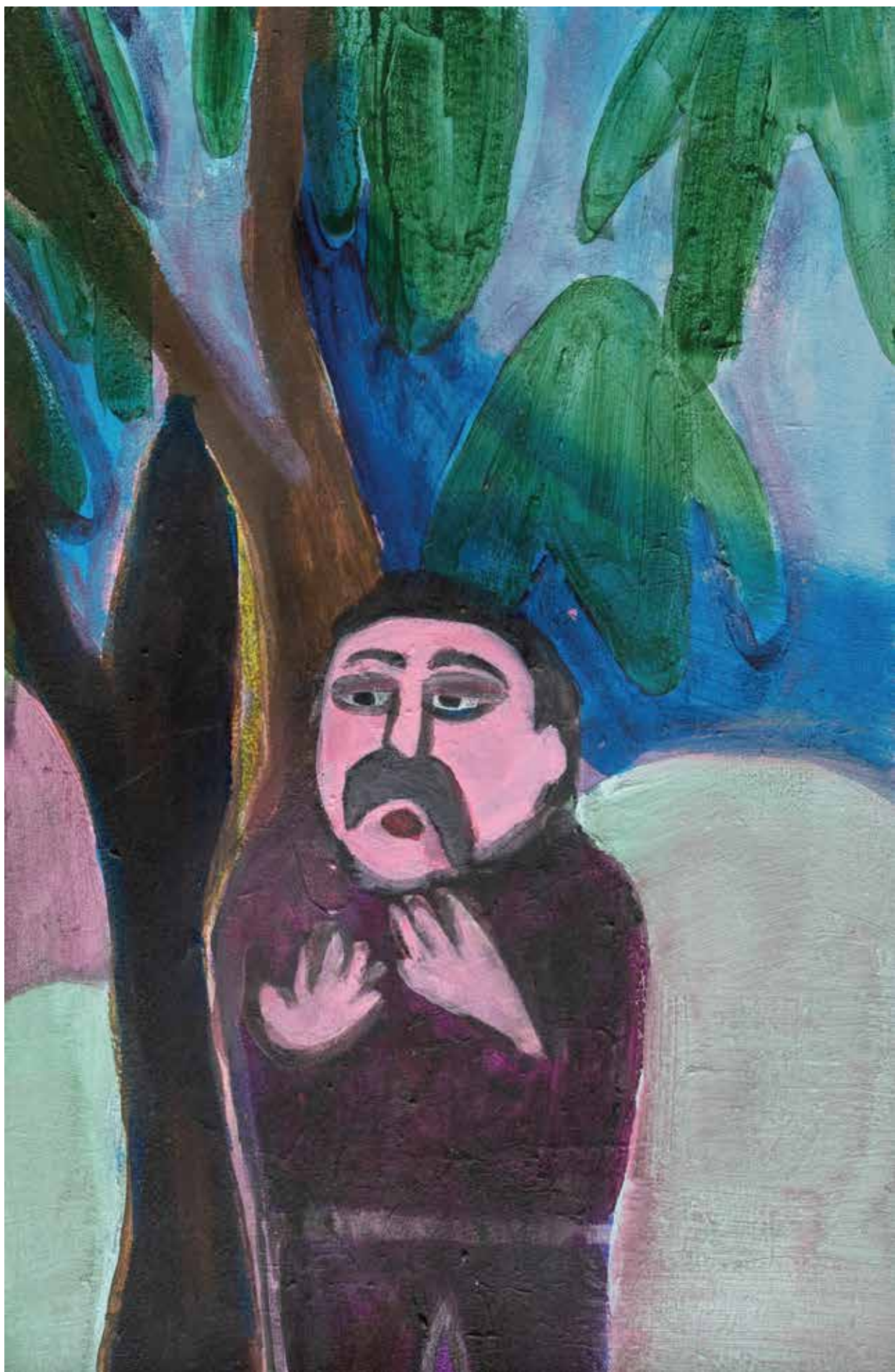
A clay bust sculpture of a man's head and shoulders. The man has a full, curly beard and mustache. He is wearing a headband or a similar headpiece. The sculpture is made of a light-colored clay and is set against a dark, almost black background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the clay and the details of the man's features.

Sophia Balagamwala

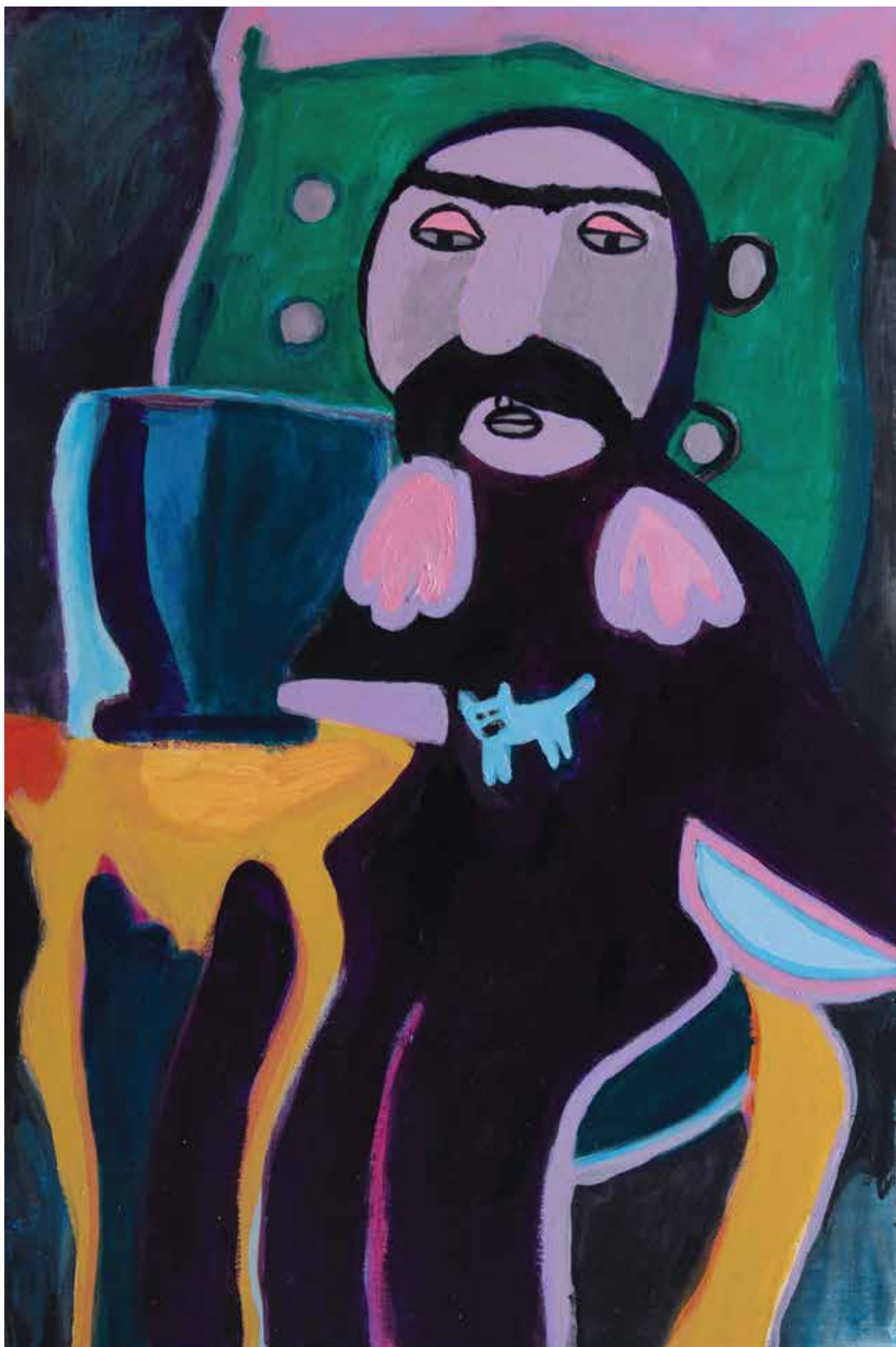
## Artist Statement

Grounded in archives and museum collections, Sophia Balagamwala's artistic practice combines real and fabricated events and their entanglements with and between colonial histories, national narratives and personal histories in South Asia.

Playing with soft materials and unassuming palettes to subvert traditional formats of representation and display, the subjects of her paintings, sculptures and animations move between real and imagined worlds, from their colonial past, to their post and neo-colonial present. Occupying a space between history, fiction, satire and the nonsensical, they are forever displaced.



Title: Hike in Forest Hill  
Medium: Acrylics on Canvas  
Size: 18 x 12 Inches  
Year: 2020



Title: Seated Portrait  
Medium: Acrylics on Canvas  
Size: 36 x 24 Inches  
Year: 2020



Title: Untitled  
Medium: Acrylics and Inks on Canvas  
Size: 24 x 36 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Collectors Portrait  
Medium: Acrylics, Oil Sticks and Inks on Canvas  
Size: 36 x 36 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Not Victoria's Lion II  
Medium: Acrylics on Canvas  
Size: 66 x 48 Inches  
Year: 2023



Title: Monument Not Meant to Last 02

Medium: Mixed Mediums

Size: Dimensions Variable

Year: 2021

## Profile

Sophia Balagamwala is a multidisciplinary artist and curator based in Karachi. Her practice merges real and fabricated events, to explore questions of nationhood, histories and the museum complex in South Asia.

Balagamwala has a BA from the University of Toronto (2010) and an MFA from Cornell University (2014). She has previously worked as the Lead Curator of the National History Museum in Lahore, and is currently an advisor for the Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP).

Balagamwala has been a part of several solo and group exhibitions in Pakistan and internationally. She has been an artist in residence at the 18th Street Arts Centre (2019) in Santa Monica. In 2021 she was awarded the London, Asia, Art, Worlds artist commission by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. In 2021/2022, Balagamwala was awarded the Art South Asia Project (ASAP) /British Council grant for her artist research project Inventing the Nation, which is to be published later this year.

She teaches at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

## **EDUCATION**

- 2014 Masters of Fine Arts, Cornell University
- 2010 Bachelors of Arts, University of Toronto

## **RESIDENCIES AND AWARDS**

- 2022 Inventing the Nation, Art South Asia Project (ASAP), UK
- 2021 Artist Commission Award, London, Asia, Art Worlds Conference, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, UK
- 2019 Artist Residency, 18th Street Arts Centre, Santa Monica, CA, USA
- 2018 LADIESFUND Art Prize, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2014 Baskerville Painting Award, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2018 BIG MEN WEAR REALLY BIG SHOES, Sanat Initiative, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2017 Heroes and Others, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2016 YAY YAH WOH, VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2014 The Moonch and His Poof, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

## **SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2021 Re-Examine/Retrace, AAN Gandhara Art Space, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2020 Sagar Theatre on Queens Road, LB02 Collateral event, Plaza Theatre, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2019 The Jumbo Alteration, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan  
Self Portraits in the Age of Selfie, COMO Museum, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2018 THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN, Rossi and Rossi, London, UK
- 2017 NIGHTCALL, Public Address Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, USA  
Sugarcoated, Hoxton Basement, London, UK  
Karachi Biennale 2017, Alliance Francais, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2014 CANT CAN'T, Site 109, New York, NY, USA
- 2013 Free School, Gary Snyder Project Space, New York, NY, USA

## **WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS**

- 2021 Presenter, Inter-Archives Conversations #3, Narravatising the Archive, Asia Art Archive India
- 2020 Presenter, Constructing Personal Archives 2020, Online Open Dialogue Series, Curating for Culture
- 2018 Presenter, Tate Research Centre: Asia, Critical Perspectives on Art and Education, Habib University, Karachi Pakistan

## **CURATORIAL PROJECTS**

- 2019-Present Kurachee, Tiny Publication Grant, and Publication Research space at COMO Museum, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2015-2018 Lead Curator, National History Museum, Greater Iqbal Park, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2018 Soft Bodies, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan

## **SELECT WORK EXPERIENCE**

- 2015-Present Adjunct Faculty, Liberal Arts and Fine Arts Department, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2011-2018 Lead Curator, National History Museum, Lahore, Director of Exhibitions and Programs, The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2012-2014 Teaching Assistant, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA




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