



## For Immediate Release: Bagri Foundation Announces Support of Shahzia Sikander's British debut Promiscuous Intimacies at the West Court gallery

**Can decolonisation entail forms of intimacy? In the search for an answer to this question, the new exhibition Shahzia Sikander: Unbound focuses on the earlier and more recent works of Pakistani-American artist Shahzia Sikander (b. 1969).**

Over the course of her career, Sikander has been a pioneer in the study of early modern archives of Islamic and South Asian manuscripts for her contemporary practice.

Given its legacy of colonialism, the United Kingdom holds some of the largest collections of the very manuscripts Sikander uncovers and deconstructs. The exhibition examines her innovations within manuscript techniques such as serialisation, cutting and pasting, and calligraphy. Sikander experiments with these practices in a range of media including drawing, painting, print, mosaic, animation, and, most recently, sculpture.

"The majority of the manuscripts and paintings that inspire my practice reside in British collections and I look forward to bringing my more recent works in conversation with those archives," said Sikander.

"I'm delighted to be able to show Shahzia Sikander's work at the West Court Gallery – particularly this year, when she'll be the subject of several significant museum exhibitions in the USA, it seems especially important to give audiences in the UK the chance to see it," said Dr Jessica Berenbeim, the West Court Gallery's Curator.

"We are proud to support the British debut of Shahzia Sikander's Promiscuous Intimacies. Shahzia's work is the perfect embodiment of the Foundation's aim to look at traditions through the lenses of innovative contemporary art practices to help us interpret our present." said Alka Bagri, Trustee, Bagri Foundation

The exhibition features the British debut and first outdoor installation of Promiscuous Intimacies (2020), a bronze sculpture juxtaposing European and Indian ideals of female beauty. Promiscuous Intimacies speaks to many urgent issues including race, class, history, sexuality, and gender.

Shahzia Sikander: Unbound is free to visit. It will run from 16

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**Alka Bagri**  
Trustee  
Bagri Foundation

October – 22 December 2021 and 4 January – 18 February 2022 at the [West Court Gallery in Jesus College, Cambridge](#). Please visit the event listing for the latest opening times and COVID restrictions.

The exhibition is supported by the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, and the Bagri Foundation, London. It is curated by Dr Vivek Gupta, Postdoctoral Associate in Islamic Art, with the assistance of History of Art students. It is accompanied by a scholarly symposium at Jesus College, which will be open to the public on 11–12 February 2022.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

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### About Shahzia Sikander

Pioneering Pakistani American, Shahzia Sikander, is widely celebrated for expanding and subverting pre-modern and classical Central and South-Asian miniature painting traditions and launching the form known today as neo-miniature. By bringing traditional and historical practice into dialogue with contemporary international art practices, Sikander's multivalent and investigative work examines colonial archives to readdress orientalist narratives in western art history. Interrogating ideas of language, trade, empire, and migration through imperial and feminist perspectives Sikander's paintings, video animations, mosaics and sculpture explore gender roles and sexuality, cultural identity, racial narratives, and colonial and postcolonial histories.

Sikander earned a B.F.A. in 1991 from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan. Her seminal thesis work, *The Scroll* (1989–1990), which initiated the start of the neo-miniature movement, garnered awards, exhibitions and press, and led to increased enrollment in the NCA's miniature painting department. Subsequently, Sikander was appointed lecturer in miniature painting at the school. The artist moved to the United States to pursue an M.F.A. at the Rhode Island School of Design from 1993 to 1995; from 1995 to 1997, she participated in the Glassell School of Art's CORE Program at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. A recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship (2006) and the State Department Medal of Arts (2012), Sikander's innovative work has been exhibited and collected internationally.

### About the Bagri Foundation

The Bagri Foundation is a UK registered charity, inspired by unique and unexpected ideas that weave the traditional and the contemporary of Asian culture. The Foundation, with its roots in education, is driven by curiosity and a desire to learn, and aims for each project to challenge, engage and inspire. Through a diverse programme of film, visual arts, music, dance, literature and talks, the Bagri Foundation gives artists and experts from across Asia and the diaspora, wider visibility on the global stage. Recent projects include [At Home in the World](#), a series of digital commissions; [Tantra: enlightenment to revolution](#) at the British Museum; [Object, Story, Wonder: Museum Collections Revealed](#); and [From Here to Eternity: Sunil Gupta, A Retrospective](#) at The Photographer's Gallery, London.



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