

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED ARTIST SHAHZIA SIKANDER KICKS OFF ASHK'S  
ART OFFERINGS DURING HONG KONG ARTS MONTH**

***APPARATUS OF POWER* EXPLORES THE CITY'S UNIQUE POSITION  
IN GLOBAL MARITIME TRADE**

(Hong Kong, March 14, 2016) Timed to coincide with Art Basel and to celebrate the global focus on Asian art, Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK) kicks off what is now officially known as the Hong Kong Arts Month with *Shahzia Sikander: Apparatus of Power*, an exhibition by internationally acclaimed Asian artist Shahzia Sikander, on March 14, 2016.

"We are incredibly excited to present one of the world's most talented and critically acclaimed contemporary Asian artists in her first major solo exhibition in Hong Kong. Along with artist talks, screenings, and discussions, we continue to strive and reach out to an ever wider and more inclusive community for the arts in this city," says S. Alice Mong, Executive Director of Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

Mong continues: "Last year we had over 120,000 visitors come to ASHK, and as our way to show our appreciation to the community, we are making this exhibition free and include it as part of the Hong Kong government's Appreciate Hong Kong campaign."

Amna Naqvi, Founder and Director of the exhibition's Lead Sponsor, the AAN Foundation, echoes similar sentiments. She adds: "This is such an exciting time for art in Asia and particularly for art from Pakistan and South Asia. We are privileged to be a part of it, identifying and fostering the latest contemporary artists and engaging new audiences for their work in Hong Kong and around the region."

Sikander's collection of some 70 works in *Apparatus of Power* includes early works as well as new drawings. Her rich visual vocabulary is drawn from technical experimentations, historical sources, and personal experiences. As a Pakistani artist living and working in America, she seeks to create work that communicates across multiple media. From drawing, installation, mural, animation, printmaking, to performance, the works on view in this exhibition call into question the colonial complexity in the region, in particular Hong Kong's unique position as an entrepôt for cross-cultural exchange.

This exhibition is curated by Claire Brandon, PhD candidate, at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts with Ashley Nga-sai Wu of ASHK as Assistant Curator. *Apparatus of Power* will be on view from March 16 to July 9, 2016 at the Chantal Miller Gallery. For additional details, please visit [asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/shahzia-sikander-apparatus-power](http://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/shahzia-sikander-apparatus-power).

Furthermore, a satellite exhibition is on view at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum from March 16 to June 5, presenting a selection of Sikander's works that explores the city's unique cultural heritage within the global maritime trade. For information of the satellite exhibition, please visit: <http://hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/whats-on/special-exhibition/91/>

Since moving to its permanent home in Admiralty in 2012, ASHK has staged numerous world-class exhibitions, such as *Light and Shadows - Caravaggio • The Italian Baroque Master; It Begins with Metamorphosis: Xu Bing, Temple, Scrolls, and Divine Messengers: Archaeology of the Land of Israel in Roman Times, and Life is Only One: Yoshitomo Nara*. In addition, it has produced a comprehensive public art and cultural program aimed at promoting and nurturing Asia's emerging young talents and cultivating young people's interest in the arts.

From master classes and lectures to performances and talks, ASHK has helped spark the creative interest in some 10,000 young people.

## **BACKGROUND**

Sikander's artistic journey is revealed to the audience across the four chambers and the Annex of the Chantal Miller Gallery.

In Chamber 1, *A Slight and Pleasing Dislocation* looks at Sikander's early career in the late 1980s when she underwent a rigorous apprenticeship in miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore. Her breakthrough thesis work *The Scroll* (1989-1990) challenged the entrenched visual idioms of the genre by the addition of a personal narrative that inserted broader notions of identity into the thematic and documentary subject matter that previously characterized the medium.

In Chamber 2: *I am the Exact Imitation of the Original* suggests Sikander's fascination with portraiture as a lens to study human nature and the themes of imitation, approximation and

reproduction. Her interest in compressed and intense human observation can be seen in portraits of her father, her mother, and herself.

The title of Chamber 3, *Practice Makes Perfect*, refers to Sikander's experience of rote learning as part of her miniature painting apprenticeship. Furthermore, the painting includes the musical score for *The Last Post*. The works on view in this gallery related to her animation practice both in terms of the content as well as the immersive scale of these large drawings.

On view in Chamber 4 is *Parallax*, Sikander's largest and longest animation to date. Produced for the 2013 Sharjah Biennial, the animation's iconography refers to the emirate's landscape that is at once of the desert and the sea. *Parallax* also demonstrates the element of collaboration in her work: it features a score produced by Shanghai-born composer Du Yun and includes instrumental music and vocals of Arabic poetry. These poems allude to both universal themes and local stories such as unrequited love and tales about the Strait of Hormuz. Like Hong Kong, Hormuz was a center for maritime trade in the time of the British East India Company.

Another of Sikander's animations *The Last Post* (2010) deals explicitly with the East India Company. The physical breakage of the stock character of the "Company Man" at one point in the animation functions as a metaphor for the collapse of the Anglo-Saxon hegemony over China. In another, the faceless man appears as a lurking threat in the imperial rooms of the Mughal Empire, which once ruled much of South Asia. *The Last Post* raises questions and hints at the ambiguities at stake in this contested history.

The final section of the exhibition is installed along a single wall in the Annex. Among both newly created and older works, this installation, showcases Sikander's *Empire Follows Art* series (2009). Here the works are like a political manifesto. Forceful block lettering is coupled with variations of Sikander's red fence motif – a recurring theme in Indo-Persian miniature painting - which first appeared in *The Scroll*, in the first chamber.

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### **About the Artist - Shahzia Sikander**

Shahzia Sikander is a Pakistan-born artist whose pioneering practice takes Indo-Persian miniature painting as a point of departure and experiments with scale and media, including animation, video, and mural. Recipient of the inaugural U.S. Medal of Art (2012) and the MacArthur Fellowship (2006), as well as the Asia Society Award for Significant Contribution to Contemporary Art (2015), Sikander's work helped launch a resurgence in the miniature painting department in the 1990s at the National College of Arts in Pakistan. Sikander is currently based in New York.

### **About Asia Society**

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III in New York, Asia Society is a leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context. Across the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, Asia Society provides insight, generates ideas, and promotes collaboration to address present challenges and create a shared future. Asia Society is an international organization with 12 centers in the United States, Asia, and Europe: Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Mumbai, New York, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Sydney, Washington, D.C., and Zurich

### **About Asia Society Hong Kong Center**

As an affiliate of the Asia Society global network of 12 centers, Asia Society Hong Kong Center was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders, led by the late Sir Q.W. Lee, the honorary chairman of Hang Seng Bank. In February 2012, the Hong Kong Center established its permanent home in Admiralty, Hong Kong at the former explosives magazine compound of the old Victoria Barracks. The site is steeped in history, cultural significance, and natural beauty, and offers a broad range of programs in the form of lectures, performances, film screenings, and exhibitions to the community.

### **About the AAN Foundation**

For more than a decade, the AAN Foundation and its founders have provided support to a wide range of art forms with a particular focus on visual arts. This includes offering platforms and support for exhibitions, private as well as public art projects and publications. The foundation is focussed on enabling and encouraging art from Pakistan, South Asia and the Asia Pacific, locally as well as globally.

### **About the Hong Kong Maritime Museum**

The Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM), an independent, non-profit registered charity supported by the shipping industry, the business community, private individuals and the Hong Kong SAR Government, is a vibrant cultural institution dedicated to preserving, collecting and displaying objects that tell the story about trade and maritime in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, and the vital roles that ships and the sea play in our past, present and future. The Museum opened its door to the public at Murray House in Stanley in 2005 and then relocated to the Central Pier No. 8 in the heart of the Central Harbour Waterfront since 2013. Today the Museum displays nearly 1,000 objects in 15 galleries and attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually.

HKMM also houses various event spaces, resource centre, roof-top social enterprise café, and gift shop that contribute to visitor's experiences, and the community of Hong Kong actively engages in education and public programming offered for schools, adults, community groups and families.

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