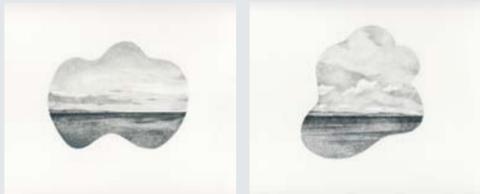


# Drawing Space

A single pencil mark on a flat plain marks the beginning of space. From this point the world can be interpreted in infinite ways. The act of drawing is often seen as a starting point - a sketch, a proof, or an outline - that comes to fruition in something more substantial, such as a painting, a sculpture or a building. It is perhaps this perception that lends drawing to experimentation. Although the conventional understanding of drawing is no longer confined to the use of pencil and paper, these basic roots unlock a very personal process. In the nineteenth century John Ruskin championed drawing as a means of understanding the world around us: 'I used to lie down on [the grass] and draw the blades as they grew, until every square foot of meadow, or mossy bank became a possession to me', he wrote. For Ruskin, the act of drawing links the artist to their surroundings, physically and mentally.



Muhanned Cader *Scapes in Shapes*, 2008. Graphite on paper, 25 x 28 cm

Several artists in *Drawing Space* rebuild their personal histories or memories through drawing - to contemplate, explore or travel through them. Muhanned Cader has meticulously filled a sketchbook with Scottish seascapes for his *Scapes in Shapes* series, each one framed with repeated motifs. Yet stripped of any identifying Celtic hue or clue of local foliage, these monotone scenes could be anywhere in the world. For Cader, the landscape is reminiscent of his native Sri Lanka. At a casual glance, the two places might seem remotely related, but Cader's memory of home informs his view, enabling him to possess, the seemingly alien Scottish landscape. For viewers, the thoughts behind the solitary process of drawing are often neither obvious nor inclusive but here the outcome is visually intriguing. Memories change over time as they pass from one person to another.



Jess MacNeil *The Shape of Between*, 2006. Digital video, 12 mins 59 secs (still) Courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldouls

In Jess MacNeil's film, *The Shape of Between*, physical distance and spaces become a way of exploring these ambiguities in the artist's personal history. The film is shot from a single vantage point that plays with the perception of perspective through movement and focus. Four boats circle each other in the water. As each boat is pulled in and out of focus, our understanding of the distance between the viewer and the boats changes, evoking the shifting voids and vivid images of memory. The impression of different moving objects is reminiscent of the multiple perspectives of miniature painting that create a shifting sense of space. The work was filmed in India, a place of significance for MacNeil. Her mother travelled there whilst pregnant with her, and an idealised memory of the country was handed down to the artist. The real experience of India becomes almost lost in this

landscape of emotion and myth, with only occasional glimpses of the real pulled into focus, before we float off again. For MacNeil the attempt to reclaim these memories serves to cement a feeling of both place and identity.

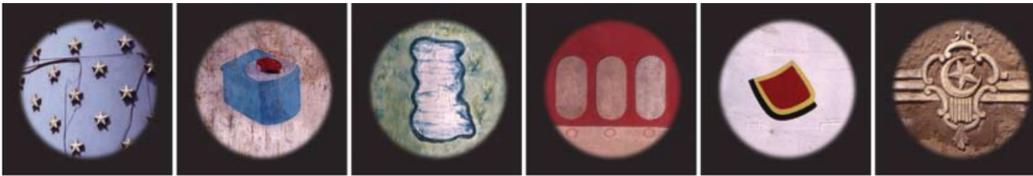
Ideas of displacement, from different viewpoints, are at the core of work by both Seher Shah and Zarina. Both artists make other histories their own and explore space to dissect their own experiences; to possess or repossess their shifting identities. Both are haunted by events that have challenged and altered their feelings of self, and are consistently drawn back to a spatial



Zarina *Few Steps in the Land of Confucius*, 2008, Graphite on paper, 170 x 99 cm

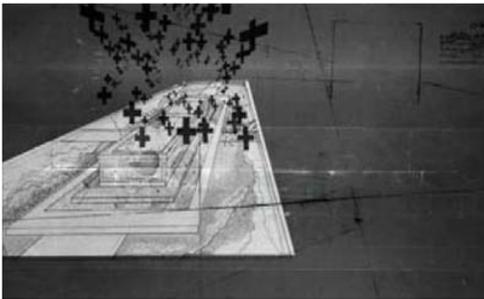
concept of it. Zarina herself has led a nomadic life between continents, drawing spaces for over four decades in a life-long conversation about self, place and home. Her Muslim family was deeply affected by living in India through and after Partition. Zarina's own peripatetic life and her family's displacement have installed in her a powerful, almost mythical, concept of home. In her earlier woodcut series of works such as *Home is a Foreign Place* (1997) she explores the elements that make a home - from the physical *Threshold, Door, Courtyard*, to the latent *Time and Border*. By dissecting the elements of a house into separate entities she creates a feeling of the home as a mere architectural shell. In *Few Steps in the Land of Confucius* (2008), Zarina leaves the family home behind. She depicts the tiles that path the way to a Buddhist temple in X'ian, China. The temple path is another conduit into a space where people seek answers to their identity. The print, taken from rubbings of these well-trodden stones, elegantly encapsulates the human search for a spiritual home.

Shah is a Muslim woman living in New York, who has witnessed a change of attitude towards Muslims in that city after the events of September 11, 2001. She trained as an architect, which feeds her understanding of place and identity as she attempts to 'connect and retrace' her 'personal visual vocabulary'.<sup>1</sup>



Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi *Aasaar* (detail), 2008, Digital print on paper, 18 x 83 cms

Using motifs from miniatures, grids and solid blocks of dark and light, her prints and drawings move between the precise lines of a blueprint to the decadent swirls of decorative art. For Shah, these are spaces of peace and nostalgia, 'whether because of childhood memories, or in their utopian geometries of community'.<sup>2</sup> Yet the clashing styles of formal drawing and elements of comic book explosions hint at something much less cosy. The recurring icon of a black cube, solid or unfolding, shifts the perception from notions of home and security to claustrophobia and confinement; again,

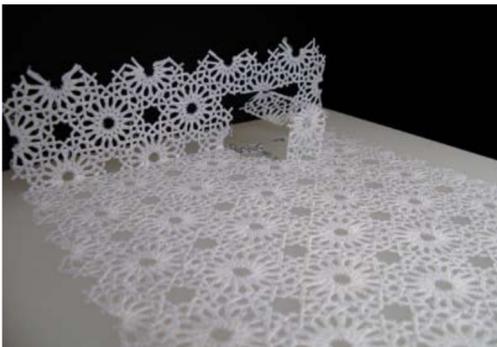


Seher Shah *Crossing the Rubicon* (detail), 2007, Archival giclee print, 30 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist and Bose Pacia

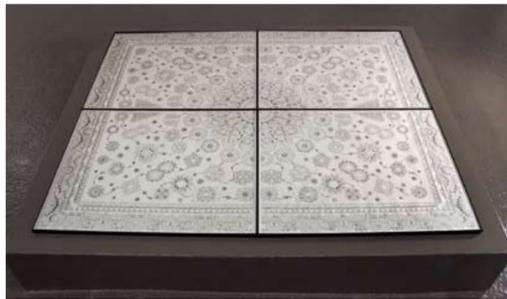
space is linked to identity, but here identity feels trapped. Viewing personal spaces from a different angle, Hamra Abbas weaves the trappings of home almost literally in her three-dimensional series *It Was a Little Demon, I Can Tell You* made from thin strips of paper with recurring text. The basic icon of a house is raised from a sheet of paper folded once to create a backdrop for these delicate webs. The text is reduced to one recurring word: 'Love'. These tiny crosshatched homes seem built to enclose and stifle emotion; a love-trap.

Nazgol Anasarinia's work moves us from an intimate personal space into the public domain. Taking the historical and cultural associations of Persian carpets, she plays with these to comment on the everyday world she sees around her. The carpet takes up most of the gallery floor space, and is covered in humorous illustrations of burger-eating men, families on mopeds and schoolgirls in lines. The figures are all linked by familiar decorative elements of carpet design. The carpet, divided into four and raised from the floor on a plinth is part print and part drawing, beautiful yet devoid of pedestrian purpose.

Also engaging with the public space, husband and wife team Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi use familiar icons to map and navigate urban and lived space. Influenced by film in both subject



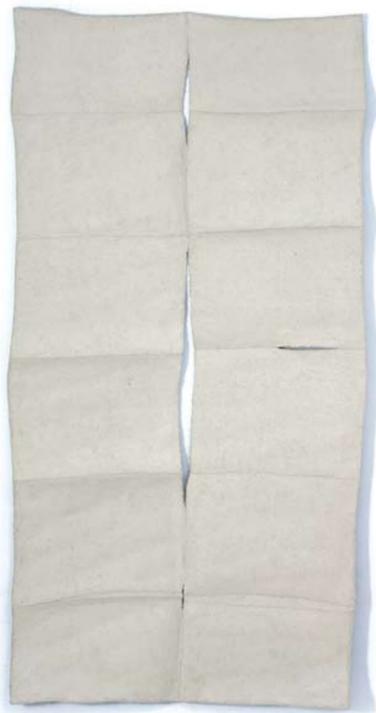
Hamra Abbas *It Was a Little Demon, I Can Tell You*, 2008, Paper collage, 14 x 21 x 14 cm



Nazgol Anasarinia *Untitled I - Pattern series*, 2007, Digital drawing and ink on tracing paper, 91 cm x 111 cm (each panel)

spatial - as is the case for the works by Sojwal Samant and Noa Lidor. Both create complex yet subtle sculptural disruptions of space, that still maintain the pared down feel of the drawn line.

Sojwal Samant's large-scale sculptural work *Beyond Reasonable Doubts* looks on first glance like a letter, unfolded and read so often that the folds are torn and the text faded and indiscernible.

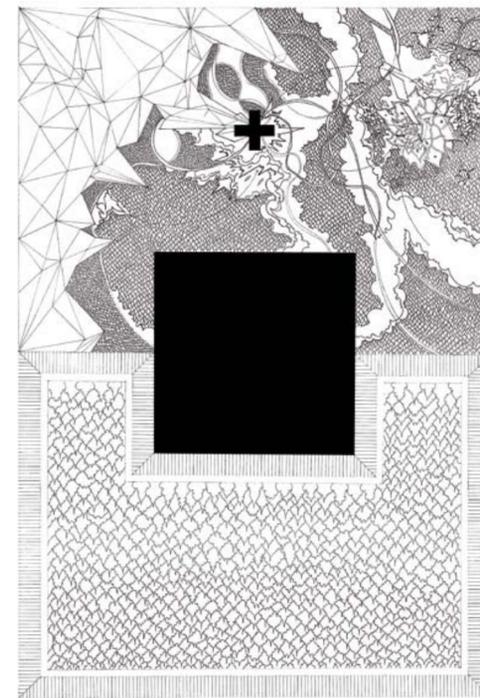


Sojwal Samant *Beyond Reasonable Doubts*, 2007, Paper pulp and wire, 180 x 94 cm Courtesy the artist and Gallery Espace



Noa Lidor *The Mammals* (detail), 2008, Installation view, Tate Modern Member's Room, Plaster on wall, dimensions variable.

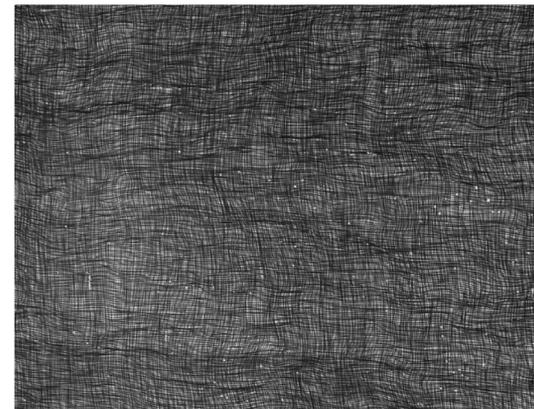
Photo by Andrew Dunkley, Tate



Seher Shah *Untitled II (Black Cube series)*, 2008 Graphite and gouache on paper, 76 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist and Bose Pacia

In fact a wire mesh creates the core of this fragile exterior, which is covered in meticulously constructed layers of paper pulp. Samant twists our perception of texture, making these solid forms appear like ancient, soft and folded parchment that might crumble to the touch, the lines of the fold exaggerated by the scale of the work. Samant's second piece in *Drawing Space* titled *Bile* includes a lurid, festering mark upon its seemingly delicate surface imbuing the work with a visceral human narrative.

Noa Lidor explores space disrupted through sculpture drawn from life, from the body. Lidor's white cast nipples subtly intrude into the gallery space as if pushing through the wall. For *Drawing Space* Lidor's milk-white nipples spell out 'The Mammals' in a line of Braille across the gallery wall - unreadable to the seeing eye, and to the unseeing touch. *The Mammals* is also the title of Lidor's current commission for the Tate Modern Member's Room,



Mohammed Ali Talpur *Untitled* (detail) (*Leeka drawing*), 2006, Ink on paper, 71 cm x 102 cm

where she has written the first line of their café menu in Braille across the wall with her plaster cast nipples.

Returning to the drawn line, Mohammed Ali Talpur immerses himself in the physicality of space through repetitive action in his *Leeka* series. His obsessive drawings of painstaking execution create grids and grills. Purporting to be escaping content in his work, Talpur's dark, dense and intense images speak volumes about the impact of making such a work, both mentally and physically, on the artist.

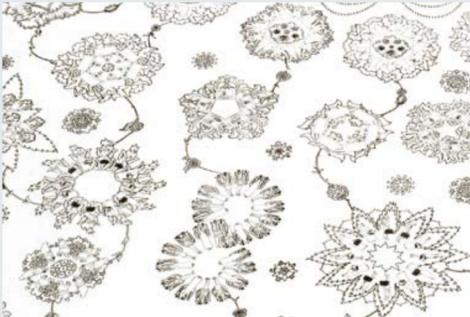
There is something of the drawing grid, used in the intricate painting of miniatures, in many of the works. The webs and grids found in works by Talpur, Abbas, Samant and Shah all appear to reference this drawing technique as a spatial conceit; knitting space with their pens. The artists in *Drawing Space* bring together a personal anthology of their collective relationship to the world around them. Through exploring space they draw lines between memory, myth and reality and, as Ruskin, they begin to possess.

Text by Eliza Gluckman

1. 'An Interview with Seher Shah and Tom Finkelpearl,' in *Seher Shah: Jihad Pop*, (New York: Bose Pacia, 2008)  
2. Ibid

Eliza Gluckman is a freelance curator, consultant and project manager with a specific interest in Asian contemporary art. She has written about Chinese contemporary art for *Art Review*, *The Guardian Arts Blog* and *Yishu Journal*. She curated *China Contemporary: Fantasy Landscapes*, at Asia House, London in 2006. She is currently curator of the Collyer Bristow Gallery and a regular contributor to *Art Asia Pacific* magazine.

# Biographies



**Nazgol Ansarinia** *Untitled I - Pattern series* (detail), 2007

## Hamra Abbas

Hamra Abbas's work was included in the 10th Istanbul Biennial, 2007; the 2006 Biennale of Sydney; and the Cetinje Biennial, 2004. She has also been invited to participate in the 4th Guangzhou Triennale, 2008. Her work has been exhibited in film festivals and galleries in Europe, North America and Asia including exhibitions at ARTIUM, Vittoria, Spain; ifa Gallery, Berlin; apexart, NY; and the Manchester Art Gallery, UK. She has been awarded residencies and scholarships by a number of institutions including Art Omi, Vermont Studio Center; the Triangle Arts Trust, London; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; and DAAD, Berlin. Hamra received her BFA and MA in Visual Arts at the National College of Arts, Lahore before going on to the Universität der Künste in Berlin in 2004. Hamra Abbas lives and works in Islamabad.

## Nazgol Ansarinia

Nazgol Ansarinia was one of three visual arts finalists for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative 2008-9. Recent exhibitions of her work include *In der Warteschlaufe. Zeitgenossische Kunst aus Teheran*, Leonhardi Kulturprojekte, Frankfurt/ Karben, Germany 2007; *Books on Buses* in collaboration with Black Dogs, Situation Leeds, 2007; *Untitled (do not give your opinion)*, Ave Gallery, Tehran, 2006; and *Cittadellarte*, Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy 2006. She received her MFA from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, 2003 and her BA at the London College of Communication, University of Arts, London, 2001. Nazgol Ansarinia lives and works in Tehran.

## Muhanned Cader

Muhanned Cader's work has been exhibited most recently in *Drawing Sculpture*, Gallery 706, Colombo, 2007 and *Belief*, the 1st Singapore Biennale, 2006. His work has been shown in exhibitions with Below Nine Gallery, Chicago; the Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery, National College of the Arts, Lahore; and at the Lionel Wendt and Vibhavi Galleries, Colombo. Cader received his BA in 1993 from the School of Art Institute, Chicago, and also attended the Kendall College of Art and Design, Michigan, USA, from 1989 to 1990. Cader was awarded the Bunka Award for Excellence in 2003 and the Kala Suri in 2005. He lives and works in Colombo.

## Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi

Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi have shown their work widely, including *Moving Ahead*, the inaugural exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Islamabad, 2007; *Fatal Love*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 2005; *DETOX*, Norway and Sweden 2004-05; *Liverpool Biennial*, UK, 2002; *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures*, Walker Art Center, Minnesota; *Portland Art Museum*, Oregon; *Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg*, Germany; *Miami Art Museum*; and *Centre Georges Pompidou*, Paris, 2001-02; *Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Brisbane, Australia; the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial, Japan, 1999; and the XXIV Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1998. They were included in *Fresh Cream* (London & New York: Phaidon, 2000), as being among the 100 most important emerging global artists. The Dadis live and work in the US.

## Noa Lidor

Noa Lidor received her BFA in 2001 from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem and her MFA in 2004 from Chelsea College of Art and Design, London. She has exhibited in London with Green Cardamom, Reception Art and Gallery Space, and more recently at The Haifa Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel, 2007. Noa Lidor recently completed the Tate Modern Members Room Commission for 2008, and her installation, *The Mammals*, is on display at Tate Modern Members Room until October 2008. She lives and works in London.

## Jess MacNeil

Jess MacNeil was born in Nova Scotia, Canada. She received her Bachelors and Masters of Visual Arts from the Sydney College of Arts in 1998 and 2004 and graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in June 2008. She has had numerous solo exhibitions with Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney. Recent exhibitions elsewhere include *Notations*, Slade Research Centre, London, 2008; *Primavera*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney,

2007-08; and *Loop: New Australian Video Art*, touring exhibitions, 2007-09. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Sydney Opera House Collection. She was the recipient of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Scholarship from the University of South of Australia in 2007 and winner of the Fauvette Loureiro Memorial Artists Travelling Scholarship. Jess MacNeil lives and works in London.

## Sojwal Samant

Sojwal Samant was born in Baroda, India. She received her BFA in 1994 and her MFA in 2000 from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. In 1999 she attended the Exchange Programme at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. She has shown work in India in solo and group exhibitions with Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai and Gallery Espace, New Delhi. Selected group shows include *Creative Space*, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai and India Habitat Center, New Delhi 2002; and *Voices Against Violence*, Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, 2002. Samant lives and works in Baroda.

## Seher Shah

Seher Shah received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, US in 1998, where she also trained as an architect. Recent solo exhibitions of her work include *Jihad Pop*, Bose Pacia Gallery, New York, 2008 and *Jihad Pop: The Black Star*, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, New York, 2007. Group exhibitions of her work include *Empire and its Discontents*, Tufts University, Medford, 2008; *Showcase Singapore*, 2008; Art Basel, Bose Pacia/Nature Morte, 2008; NY/LA, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney, 2008; *Generation 1.5*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 2007; *Summertime and Zeichnungen Contemporary Drawings*, Gallery Gisele Linder, Basel, 2007; *In a State of Emergency: Women, War and the Politics of Urban Survival*, SAWCC, New York, 2006; *Fatal Love: Radical Political Art from South Asia*, Queen's Museum of Art, New York, 2006; *Liverpool Biennial, The Independents*, International Digital Art, Liverpool, 2006. Shah's work is included in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, and Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, (Hallen fur Neue Kunst), Schaffhausen, Switzerland; and Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation (T-B A21). Seher Shah was born in Karachi and lives and works in New York.

## Mohammad Ali Talpur

Mohammad Ali Talpur received his BFA in 1998 and MFA in 2001 from the National College of Arts in Lahore. Recent exhibitions include, *Punctured and Unravelled*, Green Cardamom, London, 2007; *Orients Sans Frontieres*, Espace Louis Vuitton, 2008; *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, Art Dubai, 2008. He has also shown with Canvas Gallery, Karachi and XVA in Dubai. His forthcoming solo exhibition at Art and Public, Geneva, will take place in September 2008. Talpur lives and works in Lahore.

## Zarina

Zarina was born in Aligarh, India. She received a Bsc (Hons) degree from Aligarh Muslim University in 1958. She studied printmaking at the Atelier 17 from 1964-67 in Paris, and at the Toshi Yoshido Studio, Tokyo in 1974. She has taught at the New York Feminist Art Institute in New York; Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont; Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; University of California at Santa Cruz; and at the New York University, New York. Zarina has had solo shows at Bodhi Art, Singapore and Mumbai, 2006 and 2007; Gallery Espace, New Delhi, 2007; Bose Pacia, New York, 2005; *Mapping a Life*, Mills College Museum, Oakland, California, 1991-2001; *House with Four Walls*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, 1992; Group exhibitions of her work include *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, MOCA, Los Angeles, 2007-08 (travelling show); *Best of Artists*, ShContemporary 07, Shanghai; *Figures of Thinking - Convergences in Contemporary Cultures*, travelling show, USA, 2005-07; *Out of India: Contemporary Art of the South Asian Diaspora*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1997; *India and Pakistan Contemporary Prints*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1997. Her work is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris; and the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. Zarina lives and works in New York.



**Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi** *Aasaar* (detail), 2008

Curated by Hammad Nasar in collaboration with Leyla Fakhri and Nada Raza

Text by Eliza Gluckman

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Jess MacNeil *The Shape of Between*, 2006, Digital video, 12 mins 59 secs (stills). Courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis.

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