

Drawing Process

The meaning of drawing has evolved throughout history. For Giorgio de Chirico it was where all art began: 'Drawing, the divine art, the foundation of every plastic construction, skeleton of every good work, eternal law that every artifice must follow,' he wrote in 1919 . An even loftier view of drawing, depending on whom you ask, is attributed alternately to Matisse, Avis Newman, both, or neither, and states that: 'drawing, within the visual arts, seems to hold the position of being the closest to pure thought'. Jackson Pollock subscribed to this view, when he wrote in the late 1940s that 'the source of my painting is the unconscious. I approach painting the same way I approach drawing...direct with no preliminary studies. The drawings I do are relative to my painting but not for it'.

Despite their varying views, all these opinions hold common the conventional imagery brought to mind by the word 'drawing' - of marks in pencil or pen on paper, or of preparatory sketches made for more significant works. Yet drawing is no longer restricted to these descriptions, and can be used as a term to encompass works in all materials, from paint to sculpture to video. A more apt definition that reflects better the relevance of drawing in contemporary art can perhaps be derived from The Chambers Dictionary, where the word 'draw' is said to mean 'to evoke or bring out by some artifice'. Here, drawing defines the process the artist goes through when creating a work of art, rather than pointing to specific materials used.

This process can include myriad possibilities, including encouraging chance to play a key role in the creation of work. Often artists will set up situations where external forces are given the opportunity to define the outcome of their work. This experimental approach, of which there is now a long heritage in art history, may involve the use of machinery to create work, or may allow elements of the natural world to influence its development. This approach requires a relinquishing of control over the artwork by the artist, who after defining its conceptual terms, allows the work itself to evolve of its own accord. An element of unpredictability forms part of the finished work. Pollock's drip paintings - where the final landing place of the splashes is intentionally beyond the artist's control - can be read in these terms. Richard Long who created his works by using splashes of mud from the River Avon, brought a similar process into play, while also emphasising the defining role of nature in his work.

Ideas of relinquishing control, of allowing the language of nature to play a defining role in the finished work, and of privileging process as the way to unveil the idea behind the work are all pertinent to the artists grouped together within Drawn from Life. This exhibition explores how drawing, inspired by nature, is interpreted by a group of artists from a variety of cultural backgrounds.



Mohammad Ali Talpur, *Bird Drawings* 2006, Ink on paper, 27 x 73 cm

Relinquishing Control

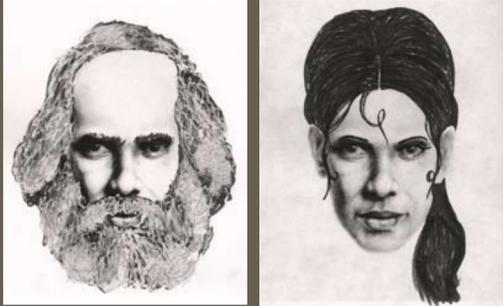
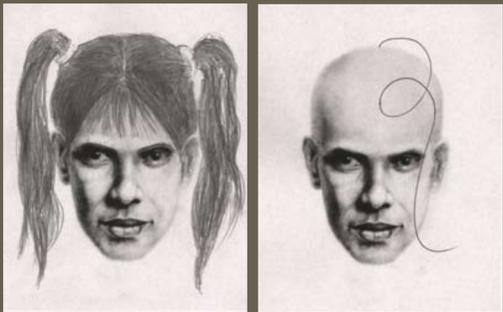
Chance is actively encouraged as a contributing element in the work of a number of the artists in Drawn from Life. For both **Mohammed Ali Talpur** and **Beate Terfloth** these experiments are closely tied to nature, with the artists looking to the organic world as both active participants in their work and sources of inspiration for it. Mohammed Ali Talpur sits on the rooftop of his studio in Lahore and traces the flight paths of passing birds using a felt-tip pen. The resulting works are frail, humble gestures on paper, abstract yet tied to a specific moment in time. Beate Terfloth's artworks are similarly evocative. Terfloth collects sections of fallen tree bark, which she then traces using white gouache onto white paper, where they appear virtually invisible. Noting the intricacy of

natural phenomena, and the imperfect lines it contains, Terfloth's art gives permanence to an ephemeral object usually overlooked, while in turn contemplating the cyclical nature of the world.

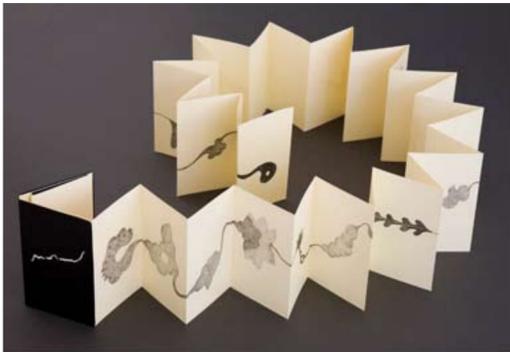


Beate Terfloth *Bark drawing* Sept 6th 07, 2007 Brush drawing, gouache on paper, 24 X 32 cm

The element of chance so central to Talpur and Terfloth's art can also be found in **Ayaz Jokhio's** work, where he hands over the development of his art to external influences, this time to other individuals. Having created a portrait of himself entirely bald, he gives the image to others to complete, which they can do only by adding hair. He also works on some of the portraits himself. The returned imagery and his own is then made into an animation that plays through each face in turn, mug-shot style, highlighting the differences hair can make to the face as well as the individual touch of the contributors



Ayaz Jokhio. *Moon Mein Aaheen Toon*, 2008, Video Animation 10 mins



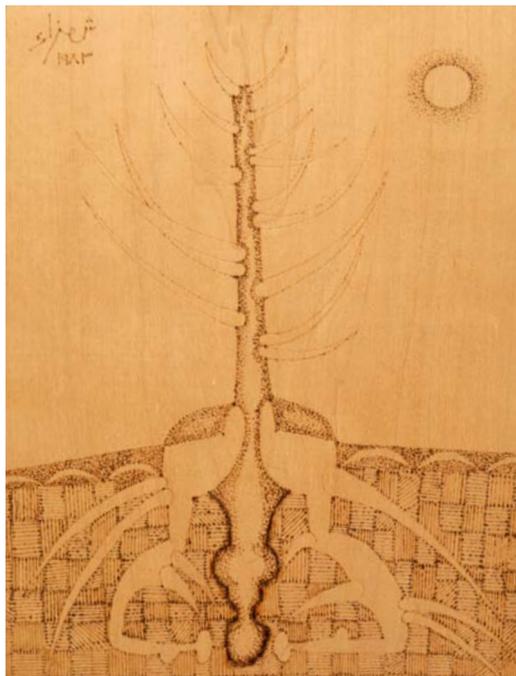
Muhanned Cader *Untitled*, 2008 Graphite on Moleskine Japanese notebook, 14 x 270 (30 pages)

Nature as Language

Muhanned Cader's work explores ideas of a language or vocabulary of nature in drawing through his is perhaps the most traditional style of drawing in Drawn from Life. Presented here within an ordinary Moleskine sketch-book, 30 concertina-folded pages pull out to reveal Cader's delicately drawn organic forms. A playful combination of both preparatory drawings and finished, 'official' artwork, they address the different values placed on these two forms of work, by both the artist and the art market. In the drawings, and with his use of recurring imagery, nature becomes a type of language and plant forms become a form of writing, an organic font.

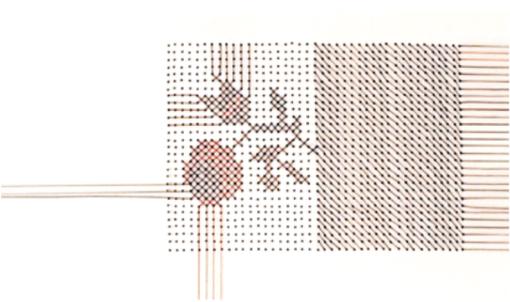
Anwar Jalal Shemza's work explores the idea of an organic font further. In his *roots* series of works, one of which is on display in this exhibition, the artist plays on the Arabic script, rendering words into natural forms. The images in this series may have the appearance of traditional botanical drawings, yet are in fact all imaginary creations, derived in great part from letters or words using the Arabic script. In his works, language loses its traditional meaning and the forms themselves communicate something entirely new. Originally trained in graphic design, much of Shemza's drawing practice reflects his intrigue with this combination of language and nature.

Rohini Devasher uses more high-tech means - employing a light box to expose transparent acetate prints onto plates - for her manipulation of nature in her solar etchings. The works present a



psychedelic, trippy vision of ordinary foliage, yet retain a sense of recognition and familiarity.

Two of the artists in *Drawn from Life* use elements of their physical presence to articulate their ideas, in very different ways. Rehana Mangi sews delicate works using the paper as textile and her own hair as thread. Geometric embroidered flowers bookend one piece, connected by long strands of hair that hang loosely between them.



Rehana Mangi *Untitled*, (detail) 2008 Human hair on wasli, 20 x 28 cms

Mangi's work brings to mind the feminist artists of the 1960s, who reclaimed ownership of their bodies through their work, alongside the use of textiles or embroidery, so associated with femininity. Her work also references the traditions of the South Asian miniature style, and the intricate lines that form the exercises students use to develop their drawing skill. The simple beauty of her finished work belies any ideas of revulsion that could accompany the use of her own hair as material.

In the creation of her work, Noa Lidor makes a naïve finger painting across a section of white Braille paper. In doing so, she creates an intriguing mix of order and sensuality, while highlighting the complications inherent in different forms of language. Interested in ideas of communication, the construction of her artwork articulates a dilemma at the centre of the piece.

Pre-configured

Experiments in production can also offer new interpretations of how an artwork is read and understood. The use of unusual materials, or specific techniques, can serve to disrupt traditional or clichéd imagery, reconfiguring it as something fresh and intriguing.

Tibetan artist Gonkar Gyatso, for example, tackles Western notions of the East, with his vibrant images that are developed using children's stickers. In one of his earlier works, he created an elaborate image of Buddha out of hundreds of stickers, yet in a work for *Drawn from Life* he simply spells out the word 'God'. While witty, Gyatso's work contains a subversive quality, with the childish, throwaway stickers rendering the text both flippant and strangely lurid.

Nazgol Ansarinia is also intrigued by how production techniques can impact on how a work is read and understood. She combines conventional imagery associated with Persian carpets and digital techniques, creating intricate drawings - both digital and with ink - on tracing paper, and surrounding them with laser-cut frames of velvet. Both Afsoon and Hamra Abbas too use traditional styles as a cipher to present more complicated messages. Afsoon creates delicate matchbox paintings that are resolutely retro-looking, combining nostalgic versions of found imagery with wry expressions, while asking 'is it love or a miss-match?' Abbas's paper plates appear similarly hand-made, constructed using tiny strips of paper, though their frail nature is belied by the sentences of text that are found on the strips, which aggressively command, 'Please get served'.

Muhammad Zeeshan, by contrast, uses process as a means to unveil a pre-meditated idea, rendering it a core quality of the work. Zeeshan's works may at first glance give the appearance of being illustrations of exotic flowers or plants, yet look closely and it is revealed that his paintings are drawn from a far more intimate source. Using imagery reminiscent of the Kama Sutra, Zeeshan has eradicated all flesh, muscle, and every embodied detail of the erotic



scenes, revealing the familiar forms only by depicting the fine hair on the body. His works raise competing ideas of censorship and fetishism, while also questioning the ubiquity of the erotic text to depictions of the East.

As its title suggests, the artists in *Drawn from Life* find inspiration for their art from the world around them. These ideas may come from the actual physical world, through fallen tree bark or the flight paths of birds, or from the scientific imaginings that the organic world can provoke - of hybrid plant forms or of nature as a literal form of language. Elsewhere, influences are taken from the



political and social narratives of our world, or from our reality as physical, body-bound beings.

The techniques the artists have used to create the works in *Drawn from Life* vary radically, bringing in experiments with materials, form and style, as well as regularly encouraging random events to dictate the development of the works. Yet despite this diversity, the artists retain an intimate, personal quality within their work, perhaps the evidence of the 'pure thought' that is so often sought within drawing. In doing so, the works reach out to the audience emotionally while simultaneously challenging our conventional associations with drawing's aesthetics to exciting, dynamic effect.

Text by Eliza Williams
Eliza Williams is a writer and critic based in London. She contributes regularly to publications including Art Monthly, Frieze, Creative Review and Flash Art.



Hamra Abbas *Paper Plates* 2008, Paper collage on illuminated plinth, Plate diameter 20 cm

Muhammad Zeeshan *Biology*, 2008 Gouache on wasli, 64.5x96 cm

Biographies



Afsoon, *Made in Heaven II* 2008, Photo-etching on matchbox, 6 x 12 cm

Afsoon

Afsoon was born in 1961 in Tehran. She studied Media, Communications and Filmmaking at Fresno State University, USA. In 2002 she began working with printmakers in London, including Colin Gale and Melvin Peterson at the Artichoke Studio. Her recent work has been exhibited in Dubai and London, and two series of her prints have recently been acquired by the British Museum, London. Afsoon lives and works in London.

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 at 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, the Victoria & Albert Museum and DAAD. 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 Cittadell'Arte, Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy 2006. She received her MFA, from the California College of the Arts (CCA), San Francisco, in 2003 and her BA at the London College of Communication, University of Arts London, 2001. Nazgol Ansarinia lives and works in Terhan.

Muhanned Cader

Muhanned Cader's work has been exhibited most recently at 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, at the Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery of the National College of the Arts, Lahore and at the Lionel Wendt, and Vibhavi Galleries in 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.

Rohini Devasher

Rohini Devasher studied painting at the College of Art in New Delhi, receiving her BFA in 2001. She received her MA in Fine Art Printmaking in 2004 from the Winchester School of Art, UK. Selected recent exhibitions include: *Multiplicity & Self*, Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, 2006; *As Others See Us: Indian Artists in Scotland*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 2006; *Rock*, Kitab Mahal, Mumbai, 2006; *By All Means*, Exhibition at the Scope Art Fair, 2008. She has exhibited with Thomas Erben Gallery, New York and Project 88 Mumbai. She lives and works in New Delhi.

Gonkar Gyatso

Recent exhibitions of Gonkar Gyatso's work include *Thermocline of Art*, *New Asian Waves* at ZKM/Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, 2007; *Contemporary Tibetan Art at 798* at Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, 2007; *Terrain*, INIVA, London, 2007; *Waves on the Turquoise Lake: Contemporary Expressions of Tibetan Art*, CU Art Museum & The Colorado Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2006; and *Tibet at the Wereld Museum*, Rotterdam, 2006. Gyatso was born in Lhasa, Tibet. He received his BA in Traditional Chinese Painting, in 1894 from the Central Institute of Nationalities, Beijing and his MA from Chelsea College of Art & Design, London in 2000. He lives and works in London.

Ayaz Jokhio

Ayaz Jokhio received his BFA from the National College of Arts in Lahore in 2001. His work has been exhibited most recently at the Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore and VM Gallery, Karachi. Past exhibitions have included *Who Are You? And Where Are You Really From?* Whitworth Art Gallery,

Manchester, 2006; *Titled*, Hirshqang, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, 2005; *Self Portrait* (with many titles) at Arcus Studio, *Moriya*, Japan, 2005; and *Raumstrass*, Germany 2004. Jokhio lives and works in Lahore.

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, Haifa, 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's Members Room until October 2008. She lives and works in London.

Rehana Mangi

Rehana Mangi received her BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2008. Her recent shows include *The Genesis-2008*, Gandhara-art Space, Karachi. She has forthcoming exhibitions in Palo Alto, California and New Delhi. She lives and works in Lahore.

Mohammad Ali Talpur

Mohammad Ali Talpur received his BFA (1998) and MFA (2001) from the National College of Arts in Lahore. Recent exhibitions include, *Punctured and Unravalled*, 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.

Anwar Jalal Shemza

Anwar Jalal Shemza was born in Simla, India in 1928. He received his BFA from the Mayo School of Art (now National College of Arts) in Lahore, before enrolling at the Slade School of Art, London (1956). While living in London he showed alongside F.N. Souza and Avinash Chandra at Victor Musgrave's Gallery One, and had solo shows at both Gallery One (1960) and the influential New Visions Centre (1958). His work has been exhibited widely, including at the 6th Triennial of World Art, New Delhi, 1956; 5th Exhibition of International Prints, Moderna Galerija, Ljubiana, 1963; *Graphische Sammlung*, Vienna, 1963; *Treasures from the Commonwealth*, Royal Academy of Arts, London 1965; 6th International Print Biennial, Tokyo, 1968; 1st British International Drawing Biennial, Teeside Art Gallery, 1973 (where he was a Major Prize recipient); *The Other Story*, Hayward Gallery, London 1989-90; *Printmakers of Pakistan*, Bradford City Art Gallery & Museum, 1997-98; *Typo*, Ikon, Birmingham, 1999-2000; and *Pakistan Another Vision*, Centre of Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Huddersfield Art Gallery; Brunel Gallery, London 2000. Selected solo shows include *Pakistan National Council of the Arts*, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore1960-2; Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art, Durham, 1963; *Commonwealth Institute*, Edinburgh, 1969; *Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 1972; *Indus Gallery*, Karachi,1985; *Manchester Metropolitan University*, 1992 and the *Birmingham City Museum*, 1997-8. Shemza died in Stafford, UK, in 1985.

Beate Terfloth

Beate Terfloth was born in Hong Kong in 1958. She studied at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin and the Kunstakademi Munich where she received her MA. In 1986 she received the DAAD award and resided in Rome until 1987. She completed a DAAD sponsored lectureship at the NCA, Lahore between 1994 and 1998. Recent projects and exhibitions of her work include *Transpositionen*, *Dancefestival Tanzen 08*; *Tanzen Sehen*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen and *Ver, Bailar*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Seville, 2007; *Correspondence with Helen Mirra*, Harvard College, Boston and *Mohammad Ali Talpur*, NCA, Lahore, 2006; *Remembering Schlegel*, a six-channel video project, 2006 and; *Allah-o-Akbar*, curated by Eugen Blume and installed at the Marienkirche Prenzlau, 2005. Beate Terfloth lives and works in Berlin.

Muhammad Zeeshan

Mohammad Zeeshan received his BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2003. He was the recipient of the Charles Wallace-Rangoonwala Residency at Gasworks Studios, London in 2007 and is currently artist-in-residence at the ACC Galerie, Weimar, Germany. Exhibitions of his work include *Contemporary Miniature Paintings from Pakistan*, curated by Virginia Whiles, Fukuoka Museum, Japan, 2004; and *Sublime Maladies*, Anant Art Gallery, Delhi, India 2007. He has shown with Canvas Gallery, Karachi and Thomas Erben Gallery and Aicon Art in New York. His work formed part of the Art Park projects at Art Dubai, 2008.

Curated by Hamdad Nasar in collaboration with Leyla Fakhr and Nada Raza

Text by Eliza Williams

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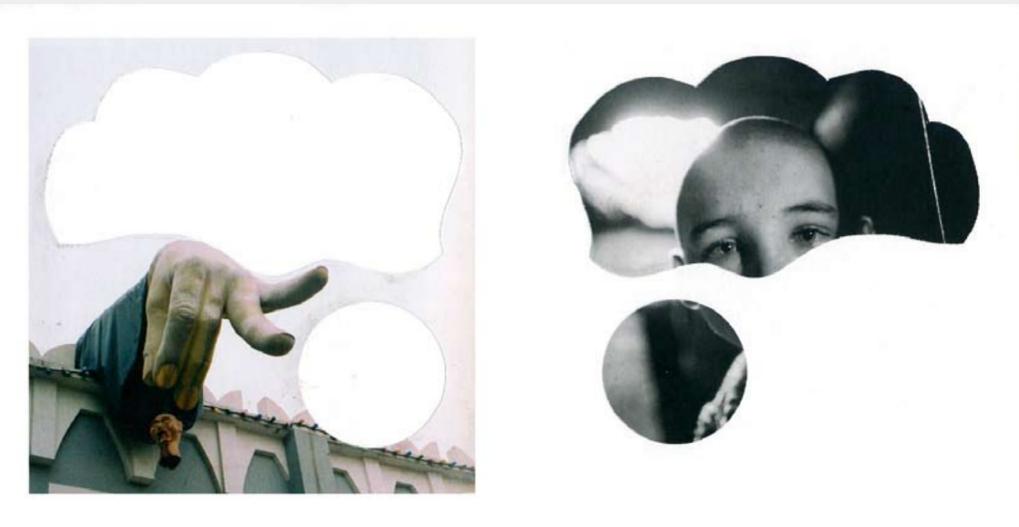
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Muhanned Cader *Untitled*, 2008 Paper collage, notebook 14 x 14 cm