

Shahzia Sikander: *High Seas; Closed Skies*

Exhibition: 5 June–31 July 2026

16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Victoria Miro is delighted present *High Seas; Closed Skies*, the gallery's first exhibition by Shahzia Sikander since announcing representation of the New York-based artist.

A focal point of *High Seas; Closed Skies* is Shahzia Sikander's acclaimed new animation, *3 to 12 Nautical Miles*. The work is a radiant cinematic tableau that navigates the enduring currents of power and trade that have shaped the global landscape from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era.

Animated from hand-painted images, *3 to 12 Nautical Miles* traces the entangled histories linking the British East India Company, Mughal India and Qing China through objects and symbols that signal how authority was constructed, distributed and contested. The work interrogates Britain's opium cultivation in India, its coercive trade with China and the First Opium War, exposing the mechanisms of imperial extraction and the deep power asymmetries between Britain and China at the time. Its title refers to the incremental expansion of territorial waters: the legal zone between three and twelve nautical miles from any coastline where sovereignty can be asserted, contested and enforced.

Co-commissioned by M+ and Art Basel and presented by UBS, *3 to 12 Nautical Miles* received its debut this spring in Hong Kong (where it is on view until 21 June), transforming the exterior of M+ into an immersive screen within the cityscape, and in doing so aligning subject with setting, past with present. The work now comes to London, the city in which the East India Company was chartered, where decisions that turned Bengal into an opium production system were ratified, and through which Hong Kong was seized as a colonial outpost. Here, the work will be heard for the first time with its score, by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Du Yun. The exhibition also features new mosaics and works on paper.

About the artist

Shahzia Sikander was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1969 and trained at the National College of Arts, where she earned a BFA in 1991. She received an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1995 and has been based in New York City since that time.

Solo presentations have taken place internationally at venues including Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, USA (2025–2026); Cantor Arts Center, Palo Alto, California, USA (2025); Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, USA (2025); Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas, USA (2022); Morgan Library and Museum, New York, USA (2021); RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (2021); Jesus College, Cambridge, UK (2021); MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2016); Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (2007); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2000); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, USA (1999), among many others.

The artist has been featured in major group exhibitions at venues including the Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK; MoMA, New York, USA; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan. She has been included in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011), the 8th and 13th Istanbul Biennials (2003, 2013), the Sharjah Biennial (2013) and the Whitney Biennial (1997).

Her work is held in the permanent collections of major institutions worldwide, with site-specific public commissions at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA; University of Houston, Texas, USA; Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, USA; Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, USA.

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