

# GREEN . ART . GALLERY

## SEHER SHAH: *THE LIGHTNESS OF MASS*

Exhibition Dates: 14 March – 9 May 2016

Opening Reception: Monday, 14 March 2016, 6 – 9 PM

Green Art Gallery presents *The Lightness of Mass*, Seher Shah's first solo show in Dubai.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Shanay Jhaveri, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Assistant Curator of South Asian Art, and Murtaza Vali, an independent writer and curator based between Brooklyn and Sharjah.

Throughout her practice, Seher Shah has consistently re-shaped representation. Working with both drawing and sculpture, she has revisited the mainstays of architectural representational methods—plan, elevation, section—to inject unsettling slippages into their rigorous formalism. If, in the past, her practice has knowingly toyed with the frontier between the resolutely rational and the vaguely visceral, this new body of work fully embraces that visceral slant.

Shah, unsurprisingly, perhaps, given her architecture background, is pre-occupied by forms—from poised Bronze Age monoliths to the sculptural composition of Brutalist buildings. Yet materiality is central to *The Lightness of Mass*—the deposit of ink on paper, the coarseness of sand cast iron, even the drawn line operates as an almost palpable material component in large-scale drawings. Shah interrogates time not only by foregrounding the natural weathering of man-made materials—the slowly oxidizing iron sculptures echo the time-worn stone of hewn megaliths—but also by navigating the role of memory in the process of seeing.

The “ghosted” images of *Brutalist Traces* teeter between presence and absence. From the New Delhi Municipal Council to London's Barbican Centre, the series eerily freeze-frames daunting Brutalist structures that at once dominate the landscape and are isolated within it. Shah dissolves the buildings in her drawings, using line no longer to faithfully render, but to abstract and erase.

*Flatlands*, presented here in its largest form of 9 ink-on-paper panels framed, proscenium-like, by black rectangles, springs from an attempt to reinterpret the language of mark making. By abstracting the purely rational language of architectural drawing, Shah introduces an element of playfulness. Uncertainty abounds: scrims shift, their translucency preventing any clear foreground or background to emerge; grids are atop grids, morphing into columns. The seriousness of the perspective view is undercut, and architecture becomes a space newly open to experience and feeling. Similarly, the *Unit Object* etchings liberate classic architectural representations from their restrictive process of perspective drawing, introducing them into a fluid dance of line and the material corporeality of ink.

A quiet weight emanates from both the *Machrie Moor* series of images, a collaboration with photographer Randhir Singh, and the *Untitled* sculptures in sand cast iron. Stone and iron are deeply elemental materials, and yet, through Shah's eyes, highly visceral; the works are man-made—carved and cast—and yet resist control. Windswept and weathered, they continue to evolve over time, their mass quietly, slowly being erased away.

Across six series of works in *The Lightness of Mass*, Shah deftly collapses the binary of the show's title, illustrating that weight and lightness, far from being contradictory, exist, in fact, simultaneously. They comprise a single state of being.

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## Seher Shah

Seher Shah's practice works with drawing, sculpture and photographs to render formal and visceral attitudes towards architecture and objects. Using drawing as a translation of attitudes towards the architectural, historical and personal, as well as the experiential nature of space and objects themselves, her work has drawn from idealized modernist architecture, utopian city plans, historical spectacles and the ambiguous relationship of objects within the changing landscapes. The work explores the materiality of drawing, employing various mediums and processes to convey the multiple experiences of architectural space.

Seher Shah received her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1998. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Lightness of Mass*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai (2016); *30 / 60 / 90* at Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2013); *Constructed Landscapes* at AMOA- Art House, The Jones Center, Austin TX (2013); *Radiant Lines*, Nature Morte, Berlin (2012); and *Brute Ornament*, two-person exhibition with Kamrooz Aram at Green Art Gallery, Dubai (2012). Selected group shows include *Scenes for a New Heritage*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), *Geometries of Difference: New Approaches to Ornament and Abstraction*, The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York at New Paltz, New York (2015); *Below Another Sky*, Glasgow Print Studio, Glasgow (as part of Scottish Print Network residency, 2014); *The Language of Human Consciousness*, Athr Gallery, Jeddah (2014); *Observed Ratios*, The James Gallery at CUNY Graduate Center, New York (2013); *Decenter: An exhibition on the Centenary of the 1913 Armory Show* at the Abrons Art Center, New York, NY (2013); *Radical Terrain* at the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, NY (2012); *Lines of Control* at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, New York, NY (2012); *Drawing 2011: Biennial*, at the Drawing Room, London, UK (2011); *Eccentric Architecture and Generation 1. 5* at the Queens Museum of Art, New York, NY (2011); *On Rage* at the Haus der Kulteren der Welt, Berlin (2010); 21: *Selections of Contemporary Art* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY (2008).

Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Devi Art Foundation, Deutsche Bank Art Contemporary, the Progressive Art collection, and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation, Vienna, Austria (T-B-A21), amongst others.

For more information, please contact the gallery at [info@gagallery.com](mailto:info@gagallery.com) or +971 4 346 9305