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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**The Media Test Wall  
presents**

**Shahzia Sikander**

***Pursuit Curve* (2004)**

**Digital animation: sound, color; 7:12 minutes**

**On View: March 10 – May 9, 2008**

**Viewing Hours: Daily 24 Hours**

**Cambridge, MA – March 2008.** Shahzia Sikander's *Pursuit Curve* is a digital animation in four sequences. In one scene, clustered inked cutouts nested in a sphere vibrate and shift. These forms move with increased rapidity until, like a swarm of bees or a flock of butterflies dispersing, the shapes are revealed as an assemblage of undulating turbans. In another sequence, starburst forms emerge from a dot of color and freeze in the sky over pulsating mountains. In additional scenes, turbans flutter and alight on people's heads or turn into tree roots. The minimal score of New York-based composer and multimedia artist David Abir provides a striking cadence for Sikander's piece.

A pursuit curve is a mathematical function constructed by analogy to having points representing pursuer and pursued. A pursuit curve is a line traced by the pursuer. For instance, if a cat chases a mouse, the pursuit curve is the mathematical representation of the path the cat takes while running after the mouse. However, while trained in the illustrative practices of Indo-Persian miniature painting, Sikander's work is not explicitly narrative. Rather, she creates a dialogue with tradition that destabilizes the interfaces between East and West, challenging the Western construction of binaries such as representation versus abstraction. Thus while the turbans can be read as symbols with complicated cultural associations, the multitude is also an abstract and formal feature. Similarly, the starburst shapes can be read as fireworks or bombs, scientific patterns or bleeding lacerations. The piece concerns meaning the viewer projects onto it rather

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than meaning the image transmits. As such, Sikander's work creates a space for questions of identity and difference.

Sikander generated *Pursuit Curve* by drawing an image that was then scanned to create a digital file. She then added to the drawing and rescanned the image. Through this repetition she created a series of stills that could be linked to create an animation. Effects and motion were then enumerated using computer software: objects were multiplied and actions duplicated. This process of picture construction investigates cultural difference not at a level of imitation in the work itself but rather through questions of the artist's process. Sikander's digital journey is not meant to lead from a place of origin or to a prescribed reference, but provide an opportunity to follow the artist as she mixes the cultural and the personal in her creative trajectory.

### **About the Artist**

Shahzia Sikander was born in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1969. She received a BFA from the National College of Arts in Lahore in 1992 and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1995. Her solo exhibits include those at Aldrich Contemporary Museum, Ridgefield, CT; The San Diego Museum of Art, California; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Kansas City; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. She has also been included in exhibitions at Museum of Fine Art, Boston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens; LA County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Drawing Center, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki. Sikander's work has also been selected for the Istanbul, Seville, Taipei, Istanbul, Venice, and Whitney Biennials. She is the recipient of several awards, including a Core Fellowship from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award; The Joan Mitchell Award; South Asian Women's Creative Collective Achievement Award; National Medal of Honor, Government of Pakistan; and the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2006. Sikander is currently based in New York.

The Media Test Wall, an ongoing series of contemporary video exhibitions, is located in the Whitaker Building (21 Ames St., Building 56) on the MIT campus.

This presentation of the Media Test Wall is generously supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Council For the Arts at MIT, and the Robert and Maurine Rothschild Fund.



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