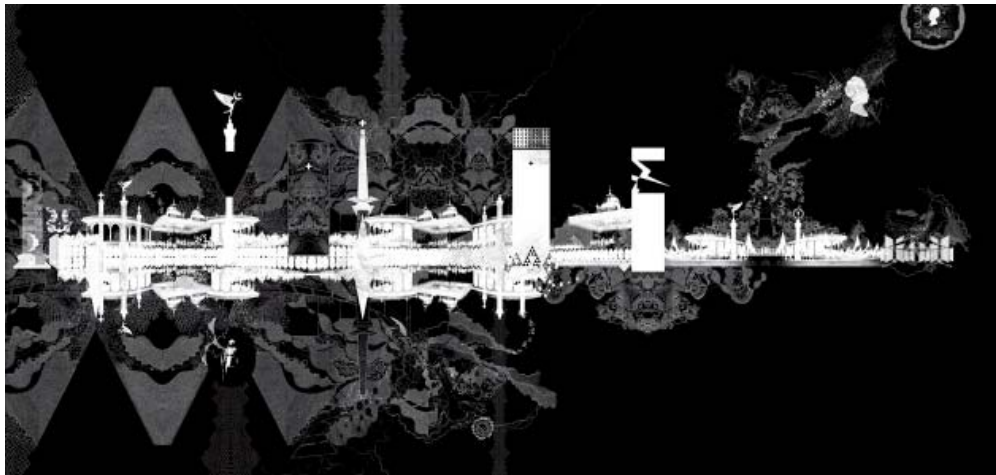




## Great Female Artists? Think Karachi.



Seher Shah / Courtesy of artist and Bose Pacia, New York  
'Geometric Landscapes and the Spectacle of Force', Seher Shah.

"Why have there been no great women artists?" asked American art historian Linda Nochlin in a landmark 1971 essay.

Four decades later, her question still stands: while a handful of Western female painters, sculptors, and performance artists—Frida Kahlo, Louise Bourgeois, Marina Abramovic—have achieved the same level of fame as their male counterparts, the West's elite art world continues to be dominated by male artists, curators, dealers, and collectors.

### Women In Leadership

- The Women Who Want to Run the World
- Q&A: Amway China's Chairwoman Eva Cheng
- Chinese Women Go Shopping
- Great Female Artists? Think Karachi.
- Q&A: Indonesia's Sri Mulyani Indrawati

Women also hold prime positions of influence in Pakistan's art system, running prestigious galleries such as Karachi's Canvas and Poppy Seed, and heading key art institutes such as the School of Visual Arts at Beaconhouse National University in Lahore (under the direction of Salima Hashmi), and Lahore's National College of Arts, which is overseen by Naazish Ataullah.

One reason for the unusually high ratio of female artists in Pakistan has to do with the fact that the art industry has not traditionally been viewed as a lucrative business by men, says South Asian art historian Savita Apte, who administers the internationally renowned Abraaj Capital Art Prize. Until very recently, creatively inclined males tended to focus on fields such

## WOMEN & LEADERSHIP

sponsored by:



by **Alexandra A. Seno**

August 27, 2010

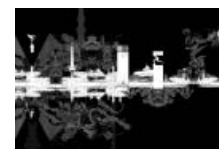
### Culture

art historian

### Trending on Newsweek



Five Emmy Shockers



Pakistan's Female Artists Take Art World by Storm



as advertising or illustration, leaving the art field wide open for some very talented women.



And these women have been taking the art world by storm: for last year’s inaugural Jameel Prize, an award given to Islamic artists at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, both finalists from Pakistan—Hamra Abbas and Seher Shah—were female. (The winner, Afruz Amighi, is an Iranian woman.) And at the Hong Kong International Art Fair this year, Pakistani painter Shahzia Sikander won the SCMP/Art Futures award.

Female Pakistani artists may also be drawing international buzz because of the

way they defy gender stereotypes about their country. “Because of the perception in the Western press, which often portrays [Muslim] women as covered, when the world looks at Pakistan, they want to go into the minds of women,” says Amna Naqvi, a former investment banker, founder of Karachi’s Gandhara-Art gallery, and an important collector whose work has been lent to museums around the world.

One of Naqvi’s favorite artists is Aisha Khalid, a painter in her 30s who is married to the prominent artist Imran Qureshi—although Khalid is considered to be the bigger name. Khalid’s *Birth of Venus* paintings depict fully veiled figures against a backdrop of Islamic symbols. Another work combines grandmotherly embroidery with pointed sexual commentary, such as sewing pins stuck through a coat, with sharp needles exposed on the inside.

Even for artists whose work does not deal with overtly feminine symbols, the link between their creative drive and their place in Pakistani culture is evident. Sikander, who was awarded a MacArthur “genius” grant in 2006, says: “Women in Pakistan in general wield a lot more power than what is perceived from abroad. In Pakistani society, women are less coddled, which makes them much more resilient, resourceful, and original.”

For Sikander, her art is a means for her to “question the social and political values of [my] time.” This places her with-in an emerging tradition of trailblazing international female artists, alongside Japanese sculptor and painter Yayoi Kusama, photographer Miwa Yanagi, video artist Tabaimo, and Iranian photographer Shirin Neshat. As artists from developing countries explode into the global art scene, these women will be leading the way.

Next: The Frida Fighters »

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN



The Case of the Questionable Frida Kahlo Paintings



Women Will Rule the World  
NEWSWEEK



Ten Things Not to Do in New York City  
Concierge.com



The Best Countries in the World  
NEWSWEEK



Our Daughters, Ourselves: On 'Women's Equality

More on Newsweek



Taliban Using Mosque Controversy to Recruit



Pakistan's Female Artists Take Art World by Storm

Shocking Discovery for your Joints


Shocking discovery by Cambridge Researcher's for amazing joint...  
JointReliefReports.com

SHOCKING: 2010 Honda Civic for \$1,732.09

Breaking News: Is this a Scam? You WON'T believe what we found!  
ctips.net


Brooklyn: Mom Makes \$6762/Month

She made \$6762 working online last month. Read her story to see how.  
World3News.com/JOBS



Subscribe now and save up to 88%

SUBSCRIBE TO NEWSWEEK



Login

Login required, click here to begin

Share


This Page

Follow

Cancel

Post

Comments 1 Items



**James Fogleman**

I wish them luck with the muslim fruitcakes. What is Sharia laws take on this?

4 days ago, 1:24:24 PM EDT – Flag – Reply

STAY CONNECTED WITH NEWSWEEK

Search

SEARCH

- Topics »
- Nation
  - Politics

- Stories »
- Beware: Combat Will Continue in Iraq
  - 'The American': The Clooney Bait-and-Switch


World  
Business  
Culture  
Health

**The Gaggle** Press, Politics and Absurdity  
**Declassified** Investigative Reporting in Real Time  
**Techtonic Shifts** Dialed In. Wired Up.  
**The Human Condition** Mind. Body. Culture.  
**Jobbed** How America Works Now

Murkowski Joins List of Beaten Incumbents  
How to Temper Israeli-Palestinian Optimism  
'Time to Turn the Page'

Authors »

Jon Meacham	Sharon Begley	Daniel Lyons
Fareed Zakaria	Howard Fineman	Lisa Miller
Jonathan Alter	Daniel Gross	Robert J. Samuelson
Julia Baird	Raina Kelley	George F. Will

 **msnbc.com**  
Hurricane Earl turns toward East Coast  
Murkowski concedes Alaska Senate race  
U.S., Iraq formally mark end of combat mission

**Slate**  
Slate V: Beck's Followers Speak Out  
My husband is finally home from his deployment to  
What's with all the celebrities sentenced to ...

**TheStreet**  
UBS Shares Staging Comeback  
Cali Mortgage Modifications Face Another Hurdle  
'Proxy Access' Is Here and I Don't Feel Fine

**The Washington Post**  
Obama: 'It is time to turn the page' on Iraq war  
Looking for a government job?  
Murkowski concedes in Alaska

**Aol News.**  
Evacuations Begin as Hurricane Earl Spins Closer ...  
Sen. Murkowski Concedes in Alaska GOP Primary  
NASA Advice: No Booze or Smokes for Trapped ...