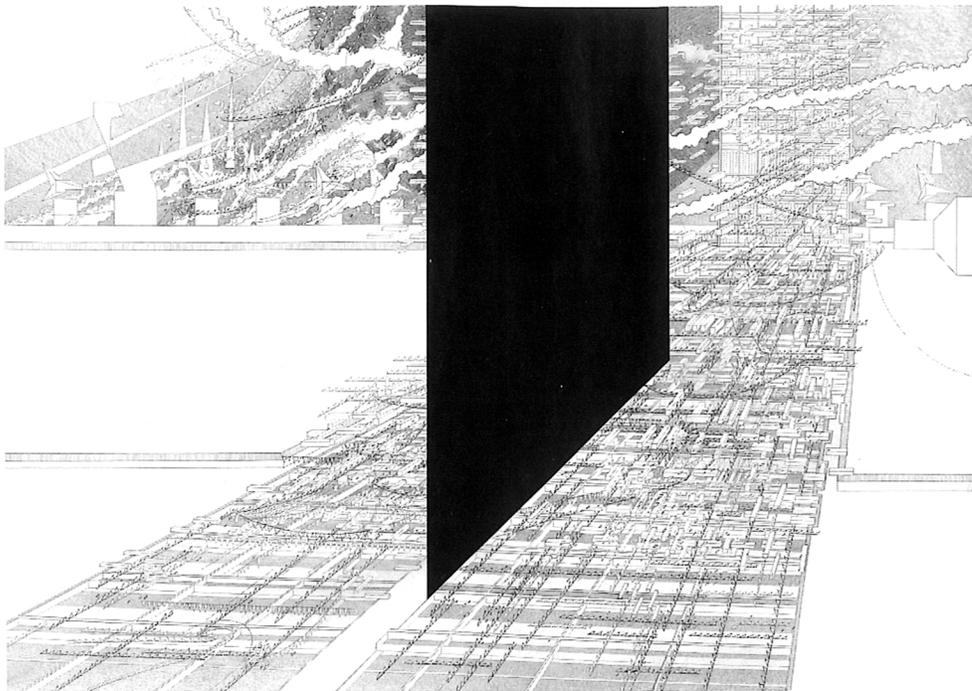
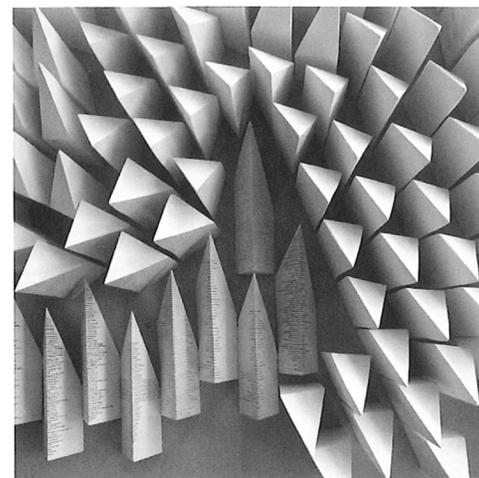


Texas Architect





Seher Shah, an artist trained as an architect, exhibited “Object Relic (Unité d’Habitation)” (left) and “Object Repetition (Line to Distance)” (below) as part of her spring installation at AMOA-Arthouse in Austin.



Seher Shah’s “Constructed Landscapes”

by Rachel Adams

Artist Seher Shah (b. 1975, Pakistan) discusses the intersection of architecture and drawing in her work. With degrees in art and architecture, Shah’s areas of interest include overlapping historical and geographical elements, reconstructing modernist architecture and urban monuments, and examining futurist landscapes. AMOA-Arthouse in Austin presented Shah’s first solo exhibition, “Constructed Landscapes,” earlier this spring.

You attended the Rhode Island School of Design for both visual art and architecture. How do your overlapping degrees translate into your work?

I am interested in the effects of rendering a space and how various mapping constructions can be represented through architecture, landscape, and objects. I try to engage with representations of the formal qualities of particular moments in architectural history through drawing, sculpture, and photography. There is a difference between an artist who is interested in architectural space and its representations and the practice of a working architect.

Much of your work is influenced by modernist and brutalist architectural styles of the mid-20th century, especially that of Le Corbusier. How did your interest in this style arise?

The hierarchy that exists in the spaces we inhabit, whether on an urban or individual scale, is something that continues to interest me. I consistently research brutalist buildings, and I am really intrigued by these structures. “Object Relic (Unité d’Habitation)” directly references the Le Corbusier project. For this drawing, I considered how brutalism affects the relationship between the landscape and the object. I find that drawing always allows for a visceral way to construct these landscapes.

Can you talk about the history and process behind “Geometric Landscapes and the Spectacle of Force” and “The Mirror Spectacle”?

My drawings explore the power dynamics of amphitheatres, civic buildings, mortuary architecture, and large-scale housing projects by removing hierarchy through specific methods of rendering. These events and objects are simultaneously fascinating and perplexing because they show the power struggles and aspirations of the context in which they are located.

The source of my inspiration for these two works was a photograph of the Delhi Durbar, an amphitheater in Delhi that hosted several military events and ceremonies. I reconstructed the semicircle of the amphitheater through layers of drawing and digital processes. By intentionally flattening the perspective, I employed a drawing method that created an alternative view of a his-

torical event and removed the hierarchy involved in the photographic image.

Are the geometric forms in your work largely invented, or do you appropriate the shapes from existing architectural spaces?

It depends on the work at hand and how the process of making it develops. Some of the monument forms in the drawings are based on historical context, while others experiment with pure form and mass.

The drawing “Object Relic (Unité d’Habitation)” uses the forms to explore the formal and visceral qualities of this idealized modernist project by Le Corbusier. The role of the architect, the use of scale, and the contradictory principles inherent in these plans are a few of the reasons I was attracted to the project. But the forms are taken directly from the elevations of the building. I then proceed to flatten out the height and mass, and situate them in a constructed landscape. ■ □

Rachel Adams is associate curator of exhibitions and public programs at AMOA-Arthouse in Austin.