



Seher Shah, a Pakistani artist based between New York and New Delhi, says she wanted the exhibition's title, *The Lightness of Mass*, 'to allude to states of being rather than anything explicit'. Courtesy Green Art Gallery

Seher Shah's latest exhibition in Dubai re-imagines architecture

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Turning a piece of imposing, brutalist architecture into something soft and gentle might seem an impossible task.

The two descriptions are innately at odds with each other, but somehow, through a series of artworks in a variety of mediums, Seher Shah has managed to inject a certain amount of buoyancy into the weighty and imposing buildings and man-made forms she has chosen as subjects for her latest exhibition.

The entry point for the show, at Green Art Gallery, is evident in the title – *The Lightness of Mass* – which neatly describes the spirit of the exhibition.

Shah, who graduated in fine arts and architecture from Rhode Island School of Design in 1998, uses her fascination with rugged concrete structures, combining them with drawings to create intriguing pieces.

In her series *Brutalist Traces*, she draws the outlines of monstrous buildings in Delhi and London but slices the image with horizontal lines to lessen the impact. She is interested not only in what is there, but also what she has erased.

The largest work in the show, *Flatlands (scrim)*, is a massive ink-on-paper drawing displayed in 15 panels, which deconstructs a 3-D structure into a flat, abstract diagram.

"I have been thinking about the ways in which abstraction can explore ideas of movement, absence and fragmentation within the landscape, and the use of the incomplete line as a means to erase objects in drawing space," Shah says.

Complementing both of these series of drawings is a set of black-and-white photographs of the standing stones at Machrie Moor in Scotland.

Captured and framed in an eerie manner, the images continue Shah's preoccupation with how man-made objects disrupt a natural environment – and how they, too, can be disrupted. Although strong and imposing, the structures are also being weathered by the elements.

In the centre of the exhibition there are a series of cast-iron sculptures.

They echo the lines and shapes seen in the architecture she focuses on but are also self-contained.

Each piece, although rigid in form and black in colour, somehow has personality and they work together individually, as well as when displayed together.

It is these pieces that contain the essence of the show – both the lightness and mass that the title suggests.

"I wanted the title to allude to states of being rather than anything explicit," she says.

"The relationships between the works are through visceral experiential connections of lightness, weight, mass, absence and erasure, but also the use of materiality through the iron sculptures and the graphite drawings."

• **The Lightness of Mass runs until May 9 at Green Art Gallery. Visit www.gagallery.com**

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