

ARTFORUM

Seher Shah

JHAVERI CONTEMPORARY

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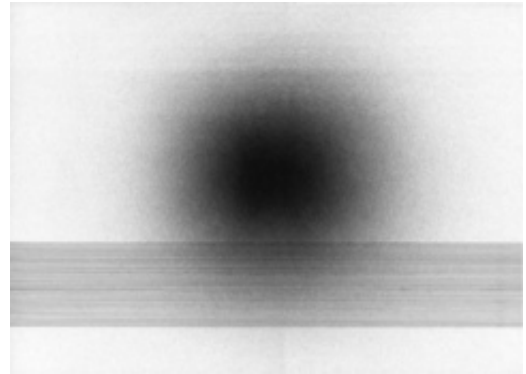
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Over the past eight years, the Pakistani-born, New York-based artist Seher Shah has taken inspiration from her training in architecture, combining real and imagined buildings with autobiographically resonant motifs in her large, Escheresque drawings. Her photographic collages of the same period have followed a similar logic, blending found images of people and landscapes with digitally introduced grids, shapes, and structures. In her current exhibition in Mumbai, "30 | 60 | 90," Shah develops these strategies while showcasing more recent preoccupations.

The titular work is made of thirty drawings, and with its hypnotic Op art qualities, it marks a new turn in her output. Black circles of various sizes and intensities—from tiny, concentrated orbs to large diffused constellations—have been sprayed onto the center of each sheet of paper. Taut lines cut across or hover around the circles. On the adjacent wall, Shah has mounted a table of numbers, which includes the combination that gives the show its title. The meaning of these numbers remains out of reach until they are explained by the gallery's accompanying press materials: 30 | 60 | 90 (all works cited, 2013), for instance, refers to the thirtieth drawing that Shah made in sixty seconds with the spraying mechanism at a distance of ninety centimeters from the paper. Shah acknowledges her drawing exercises through a clever pun in the series of photographs "Body Weight," 2013, which show wrestlers holding poses, their bodies emphasizing line, angle, and volume. In this work, Shah displays her knack for incorporating found images into her practice.

Much of the rest of the show offers similar works to those Shah has shown before—such as pencil and gouache drawings of buildings coming apart (*Study for a Totem (double wall)*; *Grid Corridor*). The structures are enveloped by strings of Buddhist prayer flags, anchored around exploding starbursts and invaded by clouds from Persian miniatures that resemble plumes of smoke. It's clear that Shah wants to deconstruct imposing modernist buildings, yet with the increasing circulation of images of attacks on similar symbols of wealth and power, such as the recent Westgate shopping mall attack, Shah's drawings take on a more sinister tone than she may have intended.

— Zeenat Nagree



Seher Shah, *30 | 60 | 90*, 2013, carbon black paint and ink on paper, 11 x 15".

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