

Zarina

Atlas of Her World

Sep 6, 2019–Feb 2, 2020

This exhibition is presented in three galleries: the Entrance Gallery, Cube Gallery, and Lower West Gallery. Visit the Mezzanine on the second level for additional resources.

Over her more than five-decade career, the Indian-born American artist Zarina Hashmi (b. 1937) has produced an expansive body of work that explores themes of memory, place, and loss. Her works engage elements of abstraction and minimalism and reveal an attention to line and form, which is derived in part from her study of mathematics and interest in the history of art and architecture. Poetry, calligraphy, and Urdu—her mother tongue—have also shaped the artist's distinct and lyrical approach to art-making. Zarina's inventive techniques and versatile practice also reflect the broad range of influences resulting from a lifetime of travel across Asia and Europe, and eventually the United States.

Zarina, who prefers to be referred to by her first name only, grew up in Aligarh, a university town in northern India. Inspired in part by family visits to nearby monuments of the Mughal era (1526–1857) and images of Western art gleaned from library books, she became interested in art from a young age. At Aligarh Muslim University, Zarina earned a degree in mathematics and statistics, intending to become an architect.

Before she could realize this goal, however, Zarina married a diplomat whose work took them to Bangkok, Thailand, where she first encountered Japanese woodblock prints. This discovery sparked a lifelong exploration of printmaking. During her husband's subsequent assignments throughout western Europe and India, she sought out opportunities to deepen her engagement with this medium. Zarina's formal instruction in artmaking first took place in Paris at Atelier 17, a pioneering

printmaking studio led by British artist Stanley William Hayter, who encouraged her to experiment with a wide array of methods. In the mid-1970s, Zarina extended this training through a fellowship in Tokyo, where she studied the traditional Japanese woodcut technique. In 1975, she moved to the United States, eventually settling in New York City, where she developed an active studio practice.

While in New York, she also became involved in feminist circles, co-curating a groundbreaking show at A.I.R. Gallery in 1980 with artists Ana Mendieta and Kazuko Miyamoto. The exhibition, titled *Dialectics of Isolation*, was significant for its introduction of global perspectives and its foregrounding of work by women of color. Zarina addressed similar concerns in a 1979 issue of the journal *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* that she co-edited. Over the course of several decades, she also taught at institutions such as Cornell University and the University of California, Santa Cruz.

With nearly thirty prints, sculptures, and collages dating from the 1960s to the present, *Zarina: Atlas of Her World* presents the artist's work alongside a selection of objects from distinct visual traditions that she has cited as touchstones throughout her career. These include a variety of prints and drawings, Islamic illuminated manuscripts, an architectural fragment, and photographs of historic sites that left a lingering impact on Zarina. Her unique interpretation of these diverse sources—from across cultures and centuries—and her versatile approach to printmaking have resulted in a body of work that opens up new territory in the paper arts.

Zarina

Entrance Gallery

The works in this gallery demonstrate the exceptional range and virtuosity of Zarina's printmaking practice. For more than fifty years she has employed a variety of techniques, from traditional woodcut and etching to innovative approaches such as creating impressions from salvaged pieces of wood. These experiments are closely tied to Zarina's explorations of the physical properties of paper, evident in the "pin drawings" (#3-6) that she created by repeatedly piercing paper with a needle to create an intricate interplay of texture and line.

Also on view in this gallery are two historical works from the artist's personal collection that have been in her studio for decades: a facsimile of a 1513 etching by Albrecht Dürer (#10) and a woodcut designed in 1857 by Utagawa Hiroshige (#11). Both artists are considered among the foremost innovators in printmaking, and these two prints represent wide-ranging inspirations and techniques that have informed Zarina's practice.

1. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Delhi, 2000

Portfolio of 3 woodcuts printed in black on handmade Nepalese paper, mounted on Arches Cover white paper
Each 25 ½ × 19 ½ inches
(64.8 × 49.5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

This portfolio delineates three different views of the Indian capital, rendered through the lens of Zarina's imagination and personal experience. She depicts the city in an unusual aerial perspective, perhaps recalling her experience of taking gliding lessons in the 1970s, as well as an interest in mapping spaces where she has lived. She achieves expressive, rough-hewn lines through the woodcut technique, carving the surface of the woodblock to create images that brim with movement and energy across three sheets of paper. Suggestive of both the passage of time and the impossibility of representing space according to any single point of view, *Delhi* captures Zarina's reflections on notions of place and memory.

2. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Santa Cruz, 1996

Portfolio of 4 etchings and a line from an Urdu poem by Faiz Ahmed Faiz; etchings printed in indigo on Lana Gravure paper; text printed in black from a metalcut on vellum

Each 17 ⅞ × 14 inches (45.4 × 35.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

From 1992 to 1997, Zarina taught printmaking at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she created this portfolio of five etchings. Each print is divided in half by a line suggestive of a horizon, inspired by moments of sunset and twilight. In the final work, the implied horizon is created by a single line of text in Urdu. The inscription, "But the heart cannot let go of its loneliness," is part of a poem by Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-84) and reflects Zarina's enduring interest in poetry and calligraphy. Overall, *Santa Cruz* exhibits a mastery of the etching technique, which depends on the deft application of acid to a metal plate. Here, Zarina's controlled use of this corrosive action allows her to represent subtle transitions between lightness and darkness, sky and sea—evocative of her time in Santa Cruz.

3. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1978
Laminated paper pierced with sewing needle
28 × 21 5/8 inches (71.1 × 54.9 cm)
Collection of Roland Augustine
4. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1979
Laminated paper pierced with sewing needle
27 1/4 × 21 3/4 inches (69.2 × 55.2 cm)
Collection of Marguerite Steed Hoffman
5. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1978
Laminated paper pierced with sewing needle
28 × 21 5/8 inches (71.1 × 54.9 cm)
Collection of Lawrence Luhring and Lucrecia Zappi-Luhring
6. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1978
Laminated paper pierced with sewing needle
25 5/8 × 19 1/2 inches (65.1 × 49.5 cm)
Collection of Marguerite Steed Hoffman
7. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1969
Relief print from collaged wood, printed in raw sienna on Indian handmade paper
21 × 30 inches (53.3 × 76.2 cm)
Collection of Kate and Charles Brizius

These prints (#7–9) signal the experimental nature of Zarina’s working methods. Following her return to India in the late 1960s after a four-year stay in France, she began collecting branches and planks of discarded wood as a starting point for a new approach to relief printmaking. This included arranging the salvaged materials into abstract compositions, inking them with earth-toned dyes, and printing impressions of their surfaces on handmade Indian paper. Inspired by the works of pioneering twentieth-century modernists Constantin Brâncuși and Kazimir Malevich—which she had encountered in Paris—as well as the tradition of Indian

papermaking, Zarina’s relief prints reveal an interest in texture, line, and space, as well as a nod to the material relationship between paper and wood.

8. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1970
Relief print from collaged wood, printed in burnt sienna on Indian handmade paper
24 3/4 × 18 3/4 inches (62.9 × 47.6 cm)
Collection of Zarina
9. **Zarina** (b. 1937)
Untitled, 1971
Relief print from twigs, printed in black on Indian handmade paper
Two sheets, 30 1/8 × 43 1/4 inches (76.5 × 109.9 cm)
Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum.
Purchased with funds provided by CARTA.
2012.15.4A-B
10. **Albrecht Dürer** (1471–1528)
Knight, Death, and the Devil
Facsimile, probably 19th or 20th century, after original engraving dated 1513
9 1/16 × 7 1/16 inches (24.9 × 19.5 cm)
Collection of Zarina
11. **Utagawa Hiroshige** (1797–1858)
Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake (from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*), designed 1857, date of printing unknown
Published by Uoya Eikichi
Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper
13 3/8 × 9 1/2 inches (34 × 24.1 cm)
Collection of Zarina

“I never impose on my medium, it translates my idea. If you carve woodblocks, they will give you prints very different to those produced from metal plates. The chisel marks should be visible, I don’t hide them, so when you look at it, you know an artist was there, my tools were there.”

—Zarina

This exhibition continues in the Cube Gallery.

Zarina

Cube Gallery

The works in this gallery exemplify Zarina's growing interest in light as both a physical phenomenon and a metaphor for spiritual life. Over the past fifteen years, she has explored this subject by incorporating materials such as gold leaf, black sumi ink, and powdered obsidian into her work. She employs these substances to conjure a range of symbolic associations that are drawn from and shared among a number of religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam—the religion of the artist and her family. She has said: "Growing up in India, I became interested in the practice of other faiths and other truths. We were also part of the Indian culture; there was no conflict in being different."

Accompanying Zarina's works are several objects from distinct artistic traditions, aspects of which she has synthesized into her own practice. These include a lavishly illuminated Qur'an (#20) and a manuscript page featuring a poem bordered by scenes of a hunt (#19), both of which employ gold to represent sacredness and prestige. Calligraphy, a fundamental element of Islamic art that is prominently featured

in these objects, is also a frequent source and catalyst for Zarina's work, including in the nearby *Beyond the Stars* (#21), which is titled after a poem by influential poet Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938).

Also in dialogue with Zarina's works are etchings by Rembrandt, an artist whose work she has long admired. His two night scenes presented here (#17–18) feature dramatic shadows punctuated by symbolic moments of illumination where the paper shines through. The etching at right shows the somber entombment of Jesus's body, while the etching at left depicts the procession of a paper star that represents the Star of Bethlehem carried by a group of singers during Christmas-related festivities. Together, these works represent a range of attempts by artists across cultures to capture the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of light.

12. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Veil, 2011

Gold leaf on bamboo blinds

142 × 48 inches (360.7 × 121.9 cm)

Collection of Zarina

To make this work, Zarina used gold leaf

to cover the surface of a nearly twelve-foot panel of bamboo blinds, evoking concepts important to Sufism, a branch of Islamic mysticism. The title refers to the "veil of the Beloved," described in Sufi literature as the invisible barrier that separates the sacred and the everyday realms. Zarina's *Veil*—with its soft, reflective qualities—represents this division, which inspires both a sense of awe and longing for the "Beloved," or the divine.

13. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Shadow House I, 2006

Cut Nepalese paper

69 × 39 inches (175.3 × 99.1 cm)

Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum. Purchased with funds provided by the Helga K. and Walter Oppenheimer Acquisition Fund. 2010.9.3

Zarina created *Shadow House I* during an artists' residency in rural California. Because she could not bring printmaking materials from her New York studio, she developed a new series of works in which she incised shapes into paper. Populated by numerous cutouts, *Shadow House I* not only recalls domestic spaces and the structure of the grid, a common device in Western modernism, but also references the geometric abstraction of stone screens (*jalis*) that are ubiquitous architectural features in Zarina's home country of India.

The shadows cast on the wall behind the work underscore the transience and ephemerality of home as both a place and a concept—a subject that has been of lasting personal significance to Zarina.

14. **Zarina (b. 1937)**

Dark Night of the Soul, 2010

Laminated BFK white paper pierced with iron needle and dyed with sumi ink
19 ½ × 19 ½ inches (49.5 × 49.5 cm)
Collection of Jean Crutchfield and Robert Hobbs

In #14, Zarina repeatedly pierced the paper with a needle, allowing light to suffuse over its knobby surface. In #15, she covered the paper with obsidian, a luminous volcanic glass. These two versions of *Dark Night of the Soul*, together with nearby works that incorporate gold, represent the symbolic potency of light and were inspired by a poem by the Catholic mystic Saint John of the Cross (1542–91) that describes a quest to find God despite the darkness of night. Speaking of her own experience, Zarina has said: “Facing the darkness, facing my mortality does not scare me. It is only when we face the dark night of the soul that we can go home into the blinding light.”

15. **Zarina (b. 1937)**

Dark Night of the Soul, 2011

Laminated BFK white paper dyed with sumi ink and covered with black obsidian
29 × 29 inches (73.7 × 73.7 cm)
Collection of Kimberlie Birks

16. **Zarina (b. 1937)**

Untitled, 2017

Collage with crushed Indian handmade paper stained with sumi ink and 22-karat gold leaf mounted on Arches Cover buff paper
13 × 13 inches (33 × 33 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

17. **Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669)**

The Entombment, 1654

Etching and drypoint
8 7/16 × 6 ½ inches (21.4 × 16.5 cm)

Saint Louis Art Museum, Funds given by Mr. and Mrs. Christian B. Peper in memory of Daniel L. Schlafly. 34:1997

18. **Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669)**

The Star of the Kings, ca. 1651

Etching with touches of drypoint
3 ¾ × 5 1/16 inches (9.5 × 14.4 cm)
Saint Louis Art Museum, Friends Fund.
144:1986

19. **Calligraphy by Mir Ali al-Husayni**

(d. 1544–45); Border illustrated by **unidentified artist** (ca. 17th century)

Page from an album made for Jahangir
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper
16 5/8 × 10 7/16 inches (42.2 × 26.5 cm)
Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of J. Lionberger Davis. 403:1952

20. **Unidentified artist**

Qur'an Manuscript, late 18th–early 19th century
Ink, gold, and lapis on paper; leather binding
6 ¾ × 4 5/8 × 2 ¼ inches (17.1 × 11.7 × 5.7 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art, 2009. 2009.294

21. **Zarina (b. 1937)**

Beyond the Stars, 2014

Woodcut printed on BFK light paper collaged with 22-karat gold leaf and Urdu text mounted on Somerset Antique paper
24 × 23 inches (61 × 58.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Zarina

22. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Dividing Line, 2001

Woodcut printed in black on Indian handmade paper and mounted on Arches
Cover white paper
25 ¼ × 19 ¾ inches (64.1 × 50.2 cm)
Collection of Zarina

This woodcut is one of Zarina's most iconic works. It is a meditation on a historic event known as the 1947 Partition, which abruptly separated British India into the modern-day countries of India and Pakistan. The division of the former colonial territory was carried out swiftly, with little regard to communities living along the newly separated areas. In the wake of the Partition, as many as three million people perished, and about fifteen million more were uprooted in the ensuing turmoil, including Zarina, who was ten years old at the time. Although she and her family were later able to safely return to India, her family left permanently in 1959 due to fear of religious discrimination. Since their departure occurred while Zarina was living abroad, the relocation left a profound mark on the artist, who was never again able to return to her childhood home in Aligarh.

In *Dividing Line*, Zarina demarcated the Partition by gouging portions of the woodblock away from the central line.

Traces of her chisel are present in the raised areas that register as black patches to the left and the right of the diagonal boundary. These graphic marks reflect the artist's labor as she repeatedly cut into the woodblock, bearing witness to the fact that making borders is never as simple as drawing a line on a map.

This exhibition continues in the Lower West Gallery.

“I have often been questioned about the map I used to draw the border [in *Dividing Line*]. Perhaps I distributed territory incorrectly. I didn't have to look at the map; that line is drawn on my heart. I have crossed many borders, they affect people who have lived the separation.”

—Zarina

Zarina

Lower West Gallery

Zarina has maintained an interest in geometry, space, and architecture since childhood. She grew up in the vicinity of grand Mughal-era monuments (1526–1857), and her family visited numerous architectural sites in and around the territory of Delhi and the city of Agra in northern India. These formative experiences ignited her interest in intricate linework, visual balance, and geometric forms that characterize the artistic traditions of her homeland. Zarina found counterparts to these aesthetic hallmarks in European abstraction and minimalism, which she encountered during her travels through western Europe and the United States, and which she eventually synthesized into her art.

Accompanying Zarina's works in this gallery is a selection of artworks and objects by other artists that reveal her profound interest in a wide range of visual and cultural references. These include a sandstone *jali*, or carved screen used in South Asian architecture (#26), that has served as an enduring source of inspiration throughout her career. Several nineteenth-century photographs are also on display

(#33–38), featuring architectural sites across northern India that have been foundational for Zarina. These include the mosques and palaces of Agra; a Mughal emperor's tomb in Delhi; and the Great Stupa of Sanchi, a sacred Buddhist site. The abstract representation of space and form in the drawing by Russian artist Kazimir Malevich (#32) also finds echoes in the formal language of Zarina's work.

23. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Pool II, 1980

Cast paper with burnt umber pigment and surface sizing with copper powder

21 ¼ × 21 ½ × 3 ½ inches
(54 × 54.6 × 8.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Luhring
Augustine, New York

The tradition of papermaking in India introduced Zarina to the idea of paper as not just a surface but also a material with its own unique properties. In the early 1980s, this interest led to a group of sculptures made with paper pulp. Her casting process included pouring and pressing wet paper fibers into deep relief molds until they dried and assumed their final form. These highly textured works reflect Zarina's ongoing interest in the tactile properties of paper while also

demonstrating a rare exploration of color. Her use of natural pigments, such as burnt umber, red soil, and indigo, represent a departure from her typically dark palette.

While abstract and open-ended, many of these sculptures (#23–24, #27–31) also hint at the architecture of her homeland, including courtyards, arches, and stepwells. Zarina has said: "It was inevitable that this exposure would elicit a lifelong love of courtyards, delicate *jalis*, and the geometry of balance in architectural forms. The open spaces of Fatehpur Sikri, outside Agra, were the beginning of my love of uncluttered spaces and the simplicity of form."

24. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Beirut Summer, 1982

Cast paper

22 × 22 × 1 inches (55.9 × 55.9 × 2.5 cm)

Collection of Zarina

25. **Zarina** (b. 1937)

Home is a Foreign Place, 1999

Portfolio of 36 woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on Kozo paper and mounted on Somerset paper

Each 16 × 13 inches (40.6 × 33 cm)

Collection of Zarina

Each of the thirty-six woodcuts in *Home is a Foreign Place* comprises a visual response to a word that represents Zarina's

concept of home. Inspired in part by the artist's early memories of her family's home in Aligarh, these prints distill the characteristics of architecture, atmospheric conditions, emotional states, and temporal experiences into abstracted monochrome images identified by their corresponding words in Urdu and English (noted on the bottom of each print). This key work is the artist's reflection on personal identity, loss, and displacement, embodying the fleeting memories and fragmented associations that reflect her notions of home. It encapsulates Zarina's sensitivity to geometry and space and her belief that "home is not necessarily a permanent place" but rather "an idea we carry with us wherever we go."

This work is installed in two groupings. It is intended to be read starting with the left group, from the top left work (*Home*), moving from left to right and top to bottom. The right group then follows the same sequence.

26. **Unidentified artist**
Jali (window screen), ca. 1580
Red sandstone
34 ¼ × 24 7/16 × 1 3/8 inches
(87 × 62.1 × 3.5 cm)
Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Director's Discretionary Fund and the Fund for the Acquisition of Islamic and Indian Art. 1984.627
27. **Zarina (b. 1937)**
Traces, 1980
Cast paper
29 ½ × 29 ½ inches (74.9 × 74.9 cm)
Collection of Zarina
28. **Zarina (b. 1937)**
Untitled, 1989
Cast paper with indigo pigment and surface sizing with mica powder
24 × 23 × 1 inches (61 × 58.4 × 2.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York
29. **Zarina (b. 1937)**
Shelter, 1983
Cast paper
8 ½ × 12 × 3 inches (21.6 × 30.5 × 7.6 cm)
Collection of Zarina
30. **Zarina (b. 1937)**
Corner, 1980
Cast paper
14 × 15 × 5 inches (35.6 × 38.1 × 12.7 cm)
Collection of Zarina
31. **Zarina (b. 1937)**
Steps, 1981
Cast paper with black pigment and surface sizing with aluminum powder
21 ½ × 21 ¾ × 1 ¼ inches
(54.6 × 55.2 × 3.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York
32. **Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935)**
Construction: Two Views, ca. 1925
Graphite on off-white wove paper
18 7/8 × 12 ½ inches (47.9 × 31.8 cm)
Harvard Art Museums/Busch Reisinger Museum, Gift of the heirs of the artist in honor of Dr. Alexander Dorner. 2002.242
33. **Raja Deen Dayal (1844–1905)**
Front View of Sanchi Tope, 1882
Albumen print
7 1/16 × 9 11/16 inches (18 × 24.6 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University
34. **Samuel Bourne (1834–1912)**
Delhi, Humayun's Tomb, General view, Including Plinth, 1863–70
Albumen silver print
9 1/8 × 11 7/16 inches (23.2 × 29 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University
35. **Samuel Bourne (1834–1912)**
Fathpur Sikri, Panch Mahal, Exterior, 1864–70
Albumen silver print
9 1/8 × 11 7/16 inches (23.2 × 29.1 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

36. **Raja Deen Dayal (1844–1905)**
Sarcophagus Inside the Taj [Mahal], Agra, ca. 1885
Albumen print
7 1/16 × 10 1/16 inches (18 × 25.5 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University
37. **Samuel Bourne (1834–1912)**
Agra. The Motee Masjid in the Fort, 1864–70
Albumen print, from wet collodion negative, mounted on album page
7 ½ × 12 5/8 inches (19 × 32 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University
38. **Samuel Bourne (1834–1912)**
Agra. Interior of the Motee Masjid, 1864–71
Albumen print, from wet collodion negative, mounted on album page
9 7/16 × 11 13/16 inches (24 × 30 cm)
Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University