

BANGASH, NIDA

Nida Bangash explores the history of Western colonialism in her paintings, video installations, and performances, which invoke colonial discourses' continued effects and the ways in which postcolonial subjects resist this legacy. In recent works, Bangash adapts her early training in the meticulous techniques of Indo-Persian miniature painting at The National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan, into similarly labor-intensive performance pieces such as 2017's *The Bridge Called My Back*, in which Bangash, on all fours, balances on her back both a bench and a man, or serving English breakfast tea in 72 imperial white teacups (symbolizing 72 years of independence), then hand washing and stacking them back in order in *The Sun Never Sets* (2017).

Similarly, *Site Plan* (2019), is a two-channel video installation which presents two different points of views of a single performance. Displayed on a wall is a monitor in which the viewer encounters the first video, a bird's eye view of tea-stained, imperial white china tea cups being stacked on a white table by an anonymous group of people dressed in white. As the cups pile up, they fall and eventually break, but the stacking continues. The second video, projected on the other side on the wall, is a frontal view of the performance in which a woman—Bangash herself—kneeling down, clad in white, holds the table upon which the cups are being stacked for the entire duration of the video.

Bangash's work often refers to the British regime's prac-

tice of repurposing and plastering historic monuments. The still-whitewashed Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore—built by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (Prince Saleem) as a memorial for his lover Anarkali, who was executed in 1599 after accused of having an illicit love affair with young Prince Saleem—served the British Raj as clerical offices, then the Anglican St. James Church (1851), and then the Punjab Record Office. It remains the Punjab Archives, and this is not uncommon as today postcolonial local governments in the sub-continent have often had to continue in the footprints left by the Raj.

Invested in what lies concealed, and to excavate what has been

obscured, Bangash applies the concept of whitewashing to historical assumptions and constructed expectations. She asks why, for instance, did her childhood drawings of home manifest as the triangular-roofed houses seen in Western story books rather than the traditional Pakistani flat-roofed home in which she lived? Bangash's interdisciplinary practice questions such actions not only to illuminate the prevalence of whitewashing of marginalized histories, but also to signal how vital it is to question our beliefs and origins. It is only then that one can become aware of the structures of power that influence and shape the ways in which non-Western entities navigate this world.

