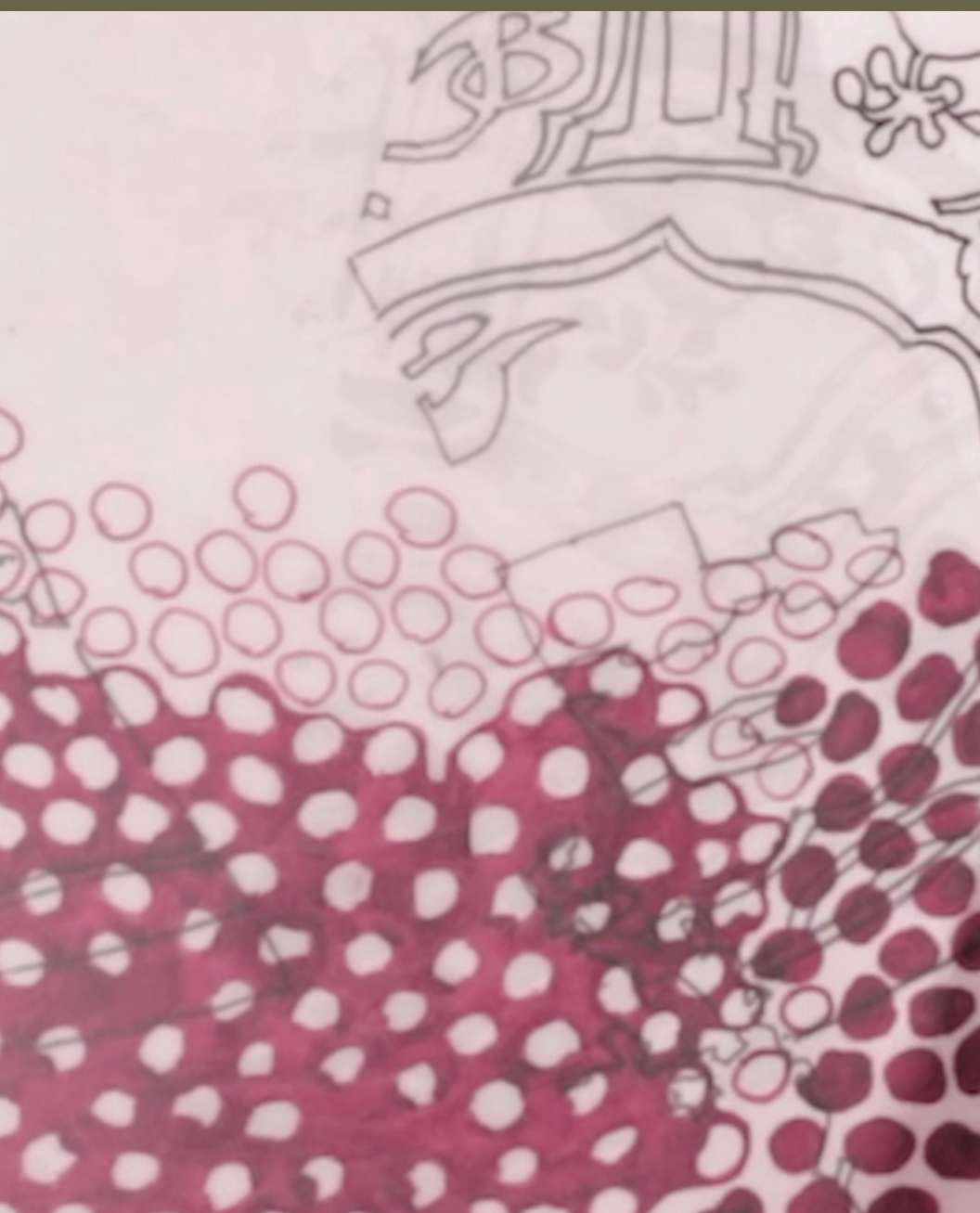


Katherine Duxiaole Zhang

MODA
CURATES
2026

Mapping Otherwise



MODA Curates is an annual opportunity offered by the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery and the MA in Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies Program (MODA) for outstanding curatorial proposals related to students' theses.

This exhibition is made possible by an endowment established by Miriam and Ira D. Wallach.

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Mapping Otherwise

Curated by Katherine Duxiaole Zhang

NAIZA KHAN
ZARINA

March 28–April 12, 2026



Wallach Art Gallery

Foreword and Acknowledgments

Betti-Sue Hertz

Director and Chief Curator, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery offers curatorial opportunities based on new scholarship and artistic innovation to Columbia University's students and faculty. One of the highlights of this mission is the annual MODA Curates program. We are delighted to partner with the Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies MA program (MODA) in Columbia University's Department of Art History and Archaeology. Each year, students, usually two, are selected through a competitive process based on the excellence of their detailed proposals and named Curatorial Fellows. For its fourteenth edition, Katherine Duxiaole Zhang's exhibition, *Mapping Otherwise*, interrogates ambiguities of borders through concepts of mapping geographic space and artist interiority, and Summer Jimin Park's exhibition, *Skins, Not Our Own*, considers work that illuminates, from a psychoanalytic perspective, human skin's function as a malleable barrier.

I am so proud of the success of MODA Curators, not only for what they accomplish at the Wallach, but for the many achievements of the program's alumni and their impact on the curatorial field. We are proud that so many of our graduates have forged distinguished careers at museums, galleries, nonprofit organizations, and universities around the globe.

Each year, the Wallach Art Gallery guides the MODA fellows through the exhibition-making process. Working closely with the Wallach's production and curatorial team, the students refine their original concept; confirm the works in the exhibition; converse with artists and lenders; experiment with exhibition design; and hone their essays through a multi-draft process. They are mentored throughout the development of public programs that extend their curatorial ideas and offer an opportunity for direct engagement with the audience. Learning the responsibilities and protocols at each phase of a curatorial project provides a valuable foundation for future success in the field.

There's a sense of urgency in *Mapping Otherwise*, curated by Katherine Duxiaole Zhang. As long as there has been a negotiation, there has been an existential desirability to both have borders and not have borders. The partition of British India along the Radcliffe Line in 1947 separated the territory into India and Pakistan along religious lines and forced about 15 million people from their homes to the other side of the line. The heartbreak of this violent separation, steeped in religious tensions, has had a long-lasting,

shuddering afterlife that has seared into the psyche of the region as much as the literal geographic division. For artists Zarina and Naiza Khan, that dramatic historical event is the main protagonist. Both address this division directly and, at the same time, use art to bridge the divide. Zhang seeks to understand the historical rupture through the insertion of the female body. This manifests in the exhibition on several registers, providing a resonance to the presentation and a purposeful circularity. By presenting an artist from India and another one from Pakistan, she bridges them to each other and to each other's work. Through her curatorial intervention, Zhang imagines the possibility of the artist's meeting, something that did not happen in real life. She sutures the divide that they both focus on in their work.

Zhang's proposition is that the exhibition is a metaphoric space where the curator can engage in mending the line that has created so much pain. That geography can be seen as a body, and the incision into it can represent the pain of those impacted, not only in the first generation, but in subsequent ones, attests to the scarring, in the psychological sense as well as the geography itself. The scar is jagged; the map tells the story on the body. As Zhang rightly explains, we can wring out the poetic—from the sky, which is the source of navigation, to the land that has become overwrought with borders, to the ocean which both divides and unites across great distances. In *Dividing Line* (2001), Zarina's ragged vertical black line divides the page emphatically as if the land, and then in *Beyond the Stars* (2014), the stars glistening in the open sky escape the finiteness of the land. Khan's video *Mapping Water* overlays and overlaps through artistic insistence, that which could be, or could have been. Her sculptures, armor against the tides of history, exhibit a determination to protect the body, through medieval means, against the mapping that did not have to do this, that we wished had not made life as it is, that made bodies ache with the pain caused by rupture.

I want to thank Professor Janet L. Kraynak, MODA's Director, for partnering with the Wallach. It is with her guidance that the students learn the theoretical underpinnings of the curatorial process and writing genre. We also thank Dr. Kraynak, as Katherine's advisor, for working closely with her on the development of the essay for this publication. This project could not have been realized without the generous assistance of the artist Naiza Khan, the representatives Lühring Augustine (New York), The Whitney Museum, and The Menil Collection as well as two private collectors, who graciously facilitated loans of works to this exhibition. We especially want to congratulate Katherine for her focus on two artists profoundly impacted by the 1947 Partition. The exhibition is a potent catalyst for thinking about art and borders more broadly.

Introduction

Janet Kraynak

Professor and Director, MA in Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies

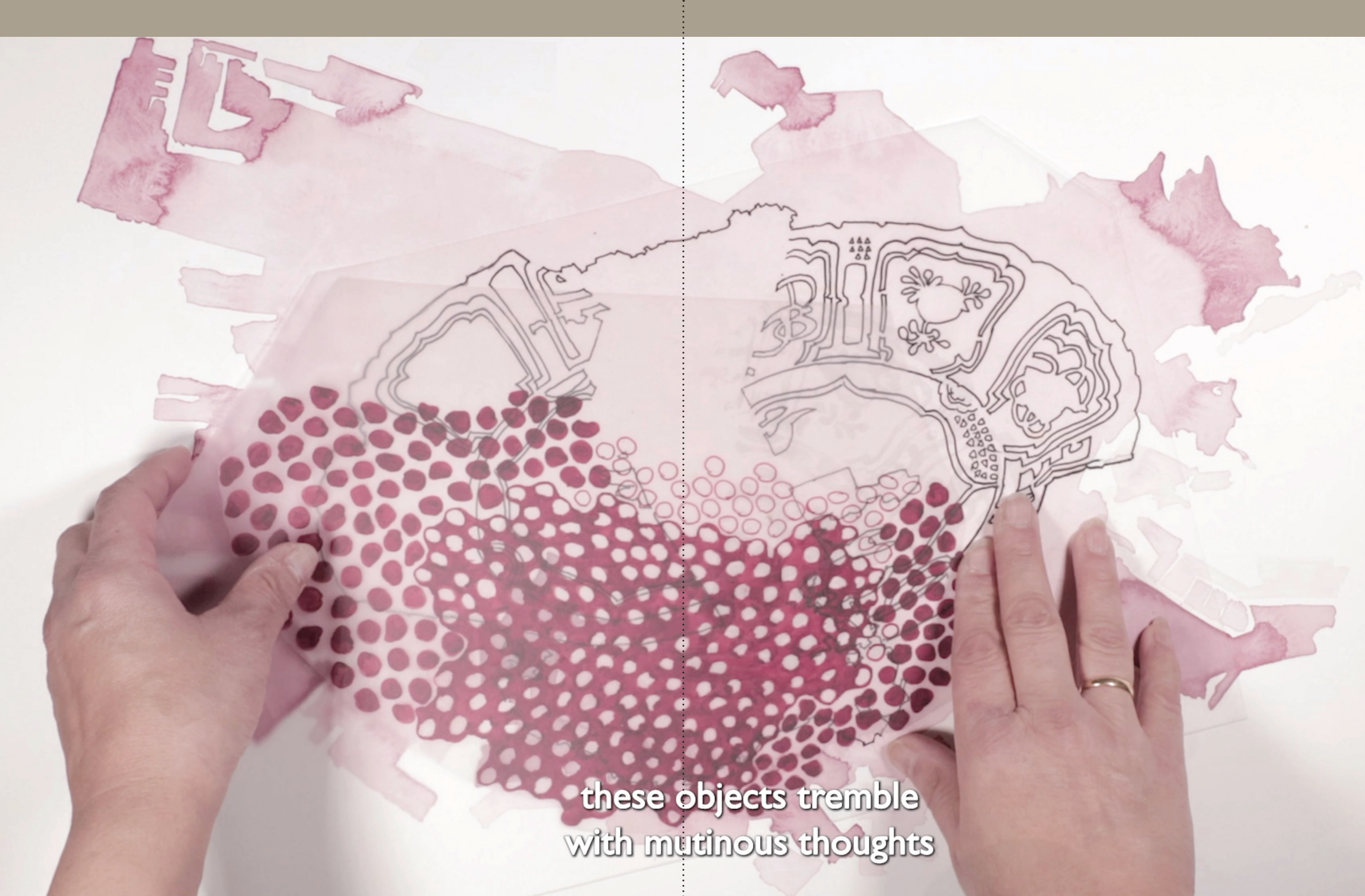
I am pleased to introduce the 2026 installment of MODA Curates, which takes place each year in the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery in the Lenfest Center for the Arts at Columbia University, and our two Fellows, Summer Jimin Park and Katherine Duxiaole Zhang. MODA Curates is a competitive program in which students submit individual exhibition proposals that are assessed for their original approach and relevance to the field. After the review process, the selected students are appointed as MODA Curatorial Fellows and given an opportunity to mount a professional exhibition, often related to their theses, in a gallery setting under the guidance of the Wallach staff. MODA Curates plays a key role in the program's pedagogical approach, providing young scholars and curators with an unparalleled opportunity that prepares them for a professional world or future post-graduate study.

In her exhibition, *Mapping Otherwise*, Katherine Duxiaole Zhang explores the longstanding, persistent, and thorny topic of borders, whose inscriptions across territories morph and change according to geopolitical events. As Zhang queries in her catalogue essay, if products of fiction, then why do borders produce such affective, emotional charge? Through the work of Zarina Hashmi (b. 1937; d. 2020), who used only her first name professionally, and Naiza Khan (b. 1968)—two artists of different generations but who share an identity tied to the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan following independence from the British Empire—Zhang's exhibition probes this timely question.

Organized with a tripartite structure (Land, Ocean, and Sky), *Mapping Otherwise* imagines a chance encounter of the two artists—whose only “real life” meeting was Khan's discovery of Zarina's prints—metaphorizing geographical movement and ultimate transcendence, into the fabric of the exhibition. Starting and concluding with Zarina's *Dividing Line* (2001), a woodcut featuring a jagged, peripatetic black line traversing the delicate handmade paper, the exhibition reveals the ongoing legacies and unsettled conflicts arising from division, in which lives were transformed, families and communities riven apart, and religious factionalism fostered political polarization. Countering the tragedy of time and circumstance, Zarina's and Khan's artworks offer both deep insights and aesthetic respite. The latest work in Zhang's show, Khan's *Mapping Water* (2023), represents an elegiac reflection upon sand and sea in filmic form: a site marked by the ghosts of colonial pasts while featuring the fluid possibilities of new movements.

Through the pairing of these two, unique artists, Zhang's exhibition presents the viewer a window onto the resilience of aesthetic work in the face of pain and conflict, while providing the space for us to engage with the volatile subject of contemporary borders.

On behalf of the MODA Program and the Department of Art History and Archaeology, I extend congratulations to 2025–2026 MODA Curatorial Fellow Katherine Duxiaole Zhang, in recognition of her accomplishments in her excellent exhibition, the culmination of her studies over these past two years.



these objects tremble
with mutinous thoughts

Mapping Otherwise

Katherine Duxiaole Zhang

How is a cartographical line a wound? When does the wound heal and its scar fade? Or do they ever?

One could argue that we do not need to reassert that borders are fictional, given the abundance of such lines of argument.¹ A border born out of a partition, for instance, has often been theorized as a conceptual line artificially engraved onto previously undivided land.² Arguments against borders resonate widely among those who already embrace them, but are easily silenced by those in positions of power, who eagerly stabilize, if not expand, the boundaries of modern nation-states.

Yet, if borders are fictional, why is pain from their construction so profoundly felt? Artist Zarina Hashmi (b. 1937, Aligarh, British India; d. 2020, London, UK), who preferred to use only her first name professionally, repeatedly called the 1947 Partition lines that divided the Indian subcontinent into the two new nation-states of India and Pakistan “line[s] etched on her heart.”³ Naiza Khan (b. 1968, Bahawalpur, Pakistan) came to know Zarina and her work through a chance encounter with her prints. Printmaking, the inherently democratic and translational medium, allows for reinscription, repetition, and the creation of many from one. The two artists, generations apart, share the same identity as post-partition subjects, along with many others, before and after them.

Mapping Otherwise offers an imaginary meeting of the two artists who were once apart temporally, geographically, and geopolitically, but with this exhibition, are no longer. The exhibition is structured along a vertical cosmology—Land, Ocean, Sky—that mirrors the movement from grounded pain to fluid relation and finally to reconciling and liberating transcendence. In meteorological imagination, the artworks converse across land, ocean, and sky—the very elements through which the world itself is drawn, and therefore, the very elements that can redraw the world.

¹ Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, Cultures of History (Columbia University Press, 2007).

² Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia*.

³ Zarina Hashmi and Sarah Burney, “Partition,” in *Directions to My House* (Asian/Pacific/American Institute at New York University, 2018), 41.



A/P

Dividing Line

Zarina 2001

In her influential book *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia* (2007), historian Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar urges us to reconsider the Partition of India in 1947 not as a singular historical event, but as a prolonged and ongoing process—a *long durée* whose reverberations continue to shape the subcontinent today.⁴ Partition, she argues, did not neatly usher in the sovereign states of India and Pakistan; rather, it initiated a protracted and violent reordering of boundaries, identities, and memories that remains unresolved.⁵ In the wake of renewed conflict between India and Pakistan in May 2025—when the Indus Water Treaty was suspended, and military action resumed in Kashmir—Zamindar’s argument feels especially prescient. The partition’s legacy has once again erupted into public consciousness, proving its ongoing capacity to disrupt lives, ignite conflict, and reopen historical wounds.

Business as usual no longer works in the face of such an explicit reactivation of historical rupture; *deal with it*, the 2025 event demands. The artworks in this exhibition offer no solution to the partition’s long afterlife, but they do aim to soften the antagonism and encourage their audience to ask: How have we come to this, and do we have to stay here? The earliest artwork in this exhibition was made in 1991 (Zarina, *Crawling House*), and the most recent one in 2023 (Naiza Khan, *Mapping Water*). Zarina’s small sculpture is of one, barely discernible house equipped with two wheels, looking for its direction towards a place to call home unaccompanied; Naiza Khan’s film 32 years later shows the former’s quest no longer unaccompanied. Geographically expansive, *Mapping Water* reminds us that mapping otherwise should be, and has been, a collective effort.



Zarina, *Crawling House*, 1991.
Private collection, courtesy the artist
and Luhring Augustine, New York

Map of South Asia.
Courtesy Library of Congress,
Geography and Map Division

The wound of the 1947 Partition lies at the conceptual core of Zarina’s practice. Starting the exhibition, her *Dividing Line* (2001) renders this history visible through a single incision: a thick black mark pressed into handmade paper, the blackness absorbing all light and denying visual access. Zarina called sumi ink “transformative,” for it swallows the surface it touches. For an artist displaced at ten years old from her home in Aligarh to refugee camps in Delhi and Karachi, the border is not an abstraction; it is a site of pain, a swallowing void, a permanent incision between memory and belonging.⁶ “Families were split, homes destroyed, the fabric of life permanently altered—all for this new border, this dividing line,” she wrote decades later.⁷

In *Dividing Line*, the act of mapping becomes inseparable from the act of wounding. For Zarina, paper is “like skin—you can scratch it, mold it, it even ages.”⁸ The borderline, then, is not merely cartographic but also corporeal. Each cut is a gesture of embodiment and an act of wounding. The thick dividing line trembles, bulges outward, screaming its discontent, recalling a fresh wound still swollen and too painful to be touched.

The abundance of corporeal metaphors in border studies is not coincidental, and Anthropologist-Geographer Franck Billé’s recent book *Somatic States: On Cartography, Geobodies, Bodily Integrity* (2025) investigates precisely such a phenomenon.⁹ Poetic as they are, these corporeal metaphors’ efficacy reaches far beyond the provision of pleasure in their reading.¹⁰ They raise the stakes of border conflicts for those politically and geographically far removed.

The body—the vessel that each being occupies—might give us a place to ground our thinking. Naiza Khan’s armor series makes explicit Zarina’s subtle gesture towards embodiment in her maps. To imagine one’s body dressed in Khan’s armor is to imagine the body contained, confined, but also protected. Steel covers flesh, replaces skin, conceals vulnerability, and

4 Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia*.

5 Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia*.

6 Zarina Hashmi, “New York: A Place to Hide Forever,” in *Directions to My House*, 88.

7 Zarina Hashmi, “Partition,” in *Directions to My House*, 41.

8 M. Brian Tichenor and Raun Thorp, “Zarina: Paper Like Skin,” *Art in Print*, vol. 2, no. 5 (2013): 46–47.

9 Franck Billé, “Introduction,” in *Somatic States: On Cartography, Geobodies, Bodily Integrity* (Duke University Press, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478060703>.

10 Billé, “Introduction.”



Naiza Kahn, *War-d-robe I*, 2009.
Private collection.



Naiza Kahn, *Bullet Proof Vest*, 2017. Private collection.

Naiza Kahn, *On The Frontline*, 2007.
Photograph by Arif Mahmood



denies injury—there would not be another chance to scar. The armor delineates the threshold of the body and marks a resolute material departure from the tender softness of skin. In a 2007 series of photographs titled *On the Frontline*, Khan’s armors are placed along the shore, sitting in the ebb and flow of the sea. “Frontline” implies a battle but does not specify whose. The empty armors seem to be waiting for their wearer, for someone to set foot into the sea, to join the frontline—that person could be you, could be me.

On the Frontline captures a moment when Khan relinquishes the protective force of her armors to oceanic fluidity. The moment coincides with a shift in her thinking from embodiment in its more literal sense to embodied landscapes.¹¹ Where Zarina’s lines solidify the wound, Naiza Khan’s maps liquefy it. In Kahn’s film *Mapping Water* (2023), the artist pours watercolor paint using seashells, translating colonial histories of trade, migration, and empire into an aqueous visual language. The sea, for Khan, is not an empty expanse but a site dense with memory. As she notes in her narration, “This land is marked by the legacy of colonial infrastructures—dams, canal systems, harbor expansions—the division of land against the land itself.”¹² The ocean, in contrast, becomes her space of continuity and re-connection.



Naiza Khan, *Mapping Water*, 2023 (video still)

¹¹ Naiza Khan and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, “Near and Far Sight Sites Converge,” *Monsoon*, vol. 1, no. 1 (May 1, 2023): 51–71, <https://doi.org/10.1215/2834698X-10345980>.

¹² Naiza Khan, *Mapping Water*, 2023. Single-channel video.

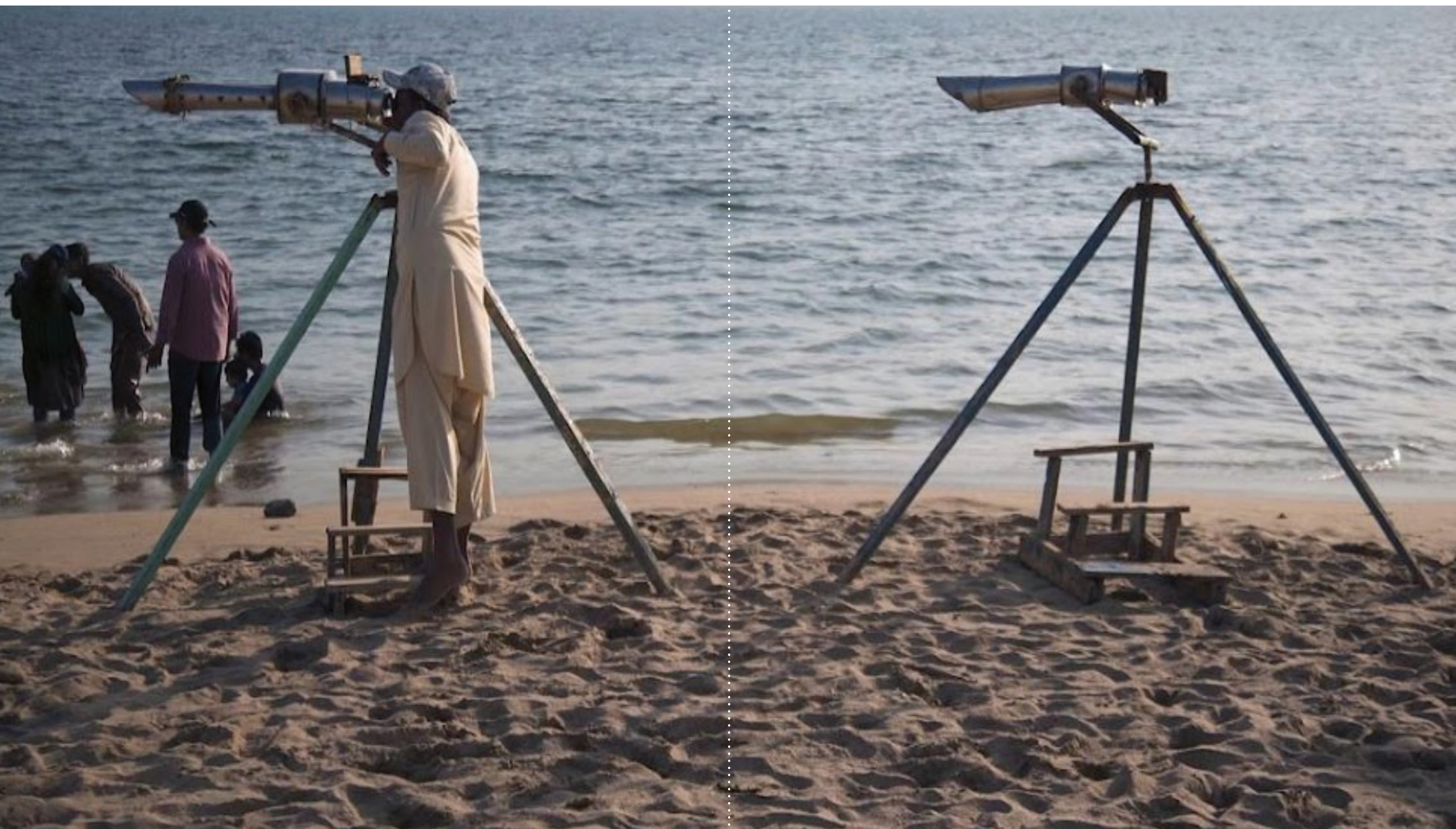


Zarina, *Beyond the Stars*, 2014. Collection of Harry Hutchison and Victoria Laboz

If Zarina’s map absorbs light, Khan’s refracts it. The two artists form an elemental pair: earth and water, opacity and transparency, fixity and flow. Both engage mapping, not as a practice of mastery, but as a poetics of relation—an archipelagic imagination that redefines geography through movement—where, to borrow a Glissantian phrase, every point connects not through dominance but through fluid interdependence.

Zarina’s late work *Beyond the Stars* (2014), turns our eyes upward, guiding them towards a gentle celestial order that has drifted into alignment. The cosmic becomes a site of reconciliation. The sky, long used for surveillance and mapping—through triangulation, aviation, and satellites—here becomes a space of repair. Zarina’s gaze refuses the colonial verticality of control; her heavens are intimate, fragile, and personal. Gold foil gleams like the faint promise of continuity, connecting the celestial with the earthly scar below.

If *Mapping Water* renders the ocean a site of submerged histories, Zarina’s sky imagines the possibility of emergence—a lifting of the gaze that does not erase the wound but carries it into the light.



Naiza Kahn, *Sticky Rice and Other Stories Part II*, 2019 (video still)

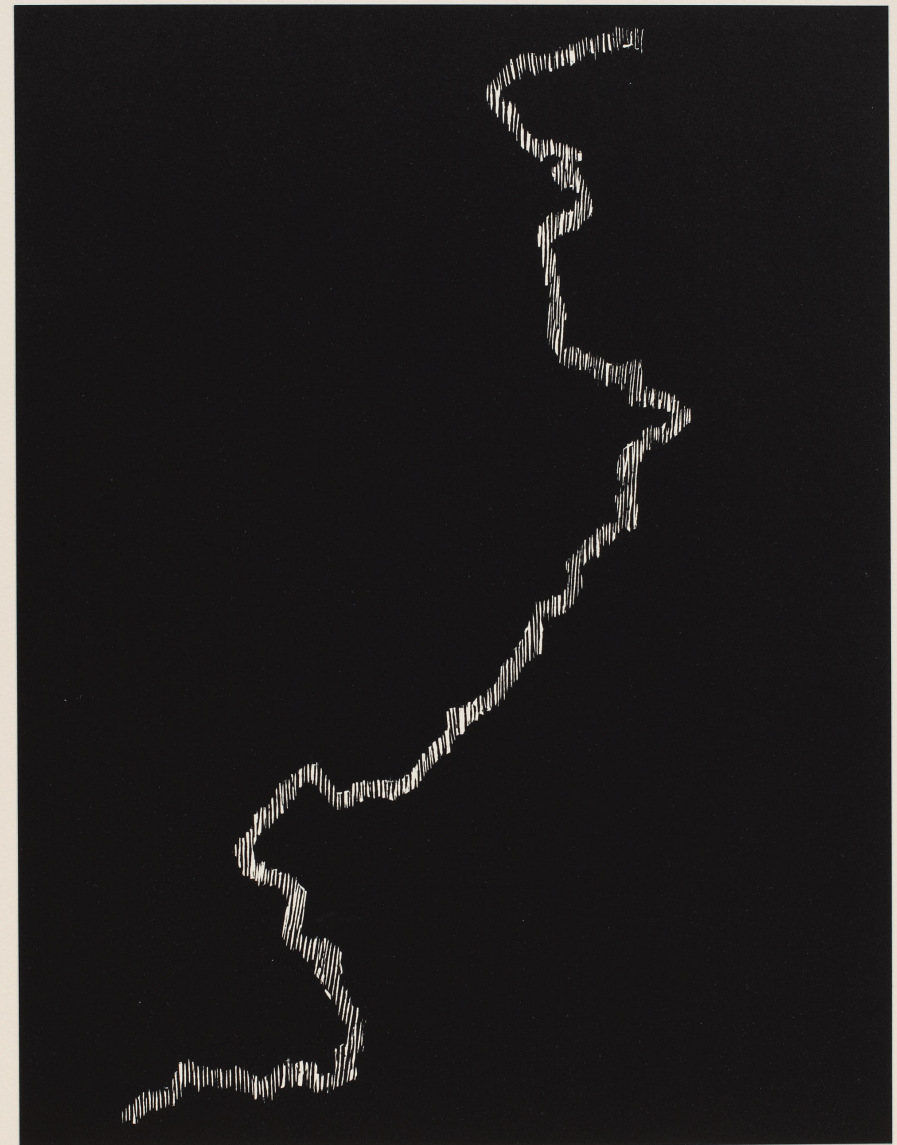
The soundtrack of Khan's *Mapping Water* reverberates through the space like a weather report—ambient, borderless weather that disregards national divides.

To map otherwise is to embrace the amorphous nature of place, to acknowledge that every border is both scar and bridge. Yet it does not mean that “borderlessness,” however ideal that might sound, is desirable in every case. *Sticky Rice and Other Stories* (2019) demystifies utopian globalism by provoking considerations of power structures underlying networks of trade, aid, sovereignty, and reliance. The film is set in Pakistan's coasts, yet finds itself pondering over China. It sits at the crossroads of colonial and capitalist forms of extraction and urges us not to lose sight of coloniality in considerations and assessments of modern nation-states with neo-imperialist ambitions.

The show begins and ends with Zarina's borderline, looping temporality into a circle rather than a sequence. Twelve years after *Dividing Line*, *Abyss* (2013) returns to the dividing line that distinguishes the same landmass in Zarina's earlier work, but now carves directly into it. Where *Dividing Line* rendered the scar, *Abyss* opens the wound. The artist's chisel reopens what history tried to close, but this incision is no longer purely painful. It is, paradoxically, an act of repair. The paired works mirror and complete one another. One image is left blank with the exception of one thin line, the other is printed completely black with the exception of one untouched line; should the viewer imagine them visually superimposed, they complete each other.

The two artists, Zarina and Naiza, were once so close to meeting and—as I am sure they would have—having a lovely conversation, in person. Zarina moved to London in her final years, where Naiza Khan also lives, yet the two never met. “Had I known she was in Wimbledon,” Khan once said, “I would have gone to visit.”¹³ *Mapping Otherwise* offers the imaginary meeting, not as lost, but as deferred: a convergence across time and that 1947 border line. Between Zarina's ink-dark line and Khan's fluid sea, a new geography takes shape—one that refuses the violence of enclosure and gestures, instead, toward connection in a larger temporality.

13 Naiza Khan, interview with the author, March 2025.



1/20

Abyss

Zarina 2013

Zarina, *Abyss*, 2013. The Menil Collection, Houston; bequest of the artist

Mapping Otherwise: WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Dimensions are listed height before width before depth

Zarina (Zarina Hashmi, b. 1937, Aligarh, British India; d. 2020, London, UK)

Untitled, 1989

Cast paper with indigo pigment and surface sizing with mica powder
24 × 23 × 1 in. (61 × 58.4 × 2.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Crawling House, 1991

Bronze with Patina
4 ¼ × 9 ½ × 3 ½ in. (10.8 × 24.1 × 8.9 cm)
Private collection, courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Delhi III, 2000

Woodcut, black ink on handmade Nepalese paper mounted on paper
25 ½ × 19 ½ in. (64.8 × 49.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Dividing Line, 2001

Woodcut mounted on paper
16 ⅛ × 12 ⅛ in. (41 × 30.8 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist

Abyss, 2013

Woodcut on BFK light paper mounted on Somerset Antique paper
27 ½ × 12 in. (69.9 × 30.5 cm)
The Menil Collection, Houston; bequest of the artist

Beyond the Stars, 2014

Woodcut with cut-and-pasted metallic paper and digital print on paper
24 ¾ × 23 ⅛ in. (61.4 × 58.6 cm)
Collection of Harry Hutchison and Victoria Laboz

Chase Along the Desert, 2015

Crushed Indian handmade paper and Sumi ink,
mounted on Somerset Antique paper
15 × 23 in. (38.1 × 8.4 cm)
Private collection, courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Untitled, 2016

Indian handmade paper stained with Sumi ink on Arches Cover paper
10 × 10 in. (25.4 × 25.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Naiza Kahn (b. 1968, Bahawalpur, Pakistan)

War-d-Robe I, 2009

Charcoal on paper
39 ⅜ × 27 ⅛ in. (100 × 71 cm), framed
Private collection

Belt IV, 2017

Metal and pre-fabricated zipper
11 ¼ × 13 ¾ × 11 in. (28.6 × 34.9 × 27.9 cm)
Private collection

Bullet-proof Vest III, 2017

Galvanized steel, suede, and leather
23 ⅝ × 15 ¾ × 11 ⅜ in. (60 × 40 × 30 cm)
Private collection

Sticky Rice and Other Stories Part I and II, 2019

Four-channel video installation with color and sound
13 min. 10 sec.
Courtesy the artist

Mapping Water, 2023

Single-channel video with sound
20 min.
Courtesy the artist

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