

Mo Shah

Visual artist and photographer Mo Shah employs surrealist cinematic techniques to merge reimagined histories with striking future states. A dystopian pop-sensibility is evident throughout his work, which is often infused with decaying pop-historical imagery and dark symbolism. A fascination with cinema, history, existentialism, fringe cultures, music, iconography and the occult pervades his work. Shah's compositions consolidate any number of his interests into dreamlike narratives that seek beauty in despair.

Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Shah has lived in Brussels, London, New York and Hong Kong. He began his art career in New York, after graduating from New York University. Shah's initial experimentation with alternative film based pop-art led to selections in several group shows in New York between 2007 and 2010. [Key work from this period: *The Parallax, Kid (Suspense Print)*]

Shah subsequently took a break to study photography- this led to a dramatic evolution in Shah's work, which has now progressed into a striking surrealist visual art. Shah's first solo show, *Transmission Eternal*, opened at the Drawing Room (Taseer) Gallery in Lahore, Pakistan (2013) - the show subsequently opened to considerable acclaim in Hong Kong at the 2014 Asia Contemporary Art Show, with its second installment (*Beyond the Superstructure*) opening shortly thereafter. Shah views the works in these shows as an inquiry into the role of religion, war, media, politics, propaganda and popular culture (with an emphasis on film) as control and transmission mechanisms within society's "base superstructure" dynamic - a construct developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (1846). [Key works from this period: *Coma Nation, Shalimar in Retrograde, Restoration of Night's Witness*]

Shah has been awarded the Critics' Choice Award at the National Photographic Art Exhibition (member FIAP: Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique) [Name of Prized Photograph: *Night's Witness*] and his works were recently entered into the permanent collection of the Photography Museum of Seoul's Contemporary Art collection.). [Works acquired: *The Dreaming, Shalimar in Retrograde, Automatic Monarch*]

Mo has participated in shows at New York's A.I.R. Gallery, Abrons Art Center (Henry Street Settlement), Diva and G. Bert Gallery in Brooklyn. He was also a featured artist for two consecutive years at the Asia Contemporary Art Show in Hong Kong.

Shah's latest show, *Test Pattern Infinity*, will open on August 26, 2015 in Hong Kong at Fabrik Gallery. The works in this show merge disparate symbols, geographies, traditions and time periods, challenging viewers to make new associations in a space that reinvents institutions and history within a pop-based context. Test Patterns refer to television test signals that were typically a series of primary colors broadcast when T.V. station transmitters were active but no programs were

broadcast (often around the beginning or end of a television schedule) – Shah’s works hijack this relic from history and broadcast a world of infinite possibilities and realities. The result is a progression in Shah’s personal brand of pop-art, seemingly culled from random and systematic fever dreams, in a universe of his own conception.

The Photographer’s Dilemma by Quddus Mirza (possibly the most accomplished and widely recognized art critic from Pakistan)

Quote:

“It is therefore difficult to say that photography has reached the level of art (one wonders, if the practitioners wanted it to be so?). Yet, in the present show, a number of works stand out due to their original thought and personalising of visual material. For instance, Hamida Khatri approaches her photographs as parodies of famous paintings, with models from her surroundings posing as the characters in those canvases. Or works by Maryam Arif, in which one is not supposed to see anything spectacular but mere spaces, which can leave their mark on the memory, for example the Shadow Path. One can mention the photograph of Mo Shah, in which the unusual element is not in the found frame, but is sought in the way reality is captured and thus transformed.”

Angels and Demons by Dua Abbas (another recognized art critic and writer)

Quote:

“I think it is the sadness and beauty behind this mining of old worlds for new, this raking of dystopias for that eternal tease - Utopia - that gives Shah's work such poetic power.”