

Sa'dia Rehman: Desire Lines

KODA/RU House, Building #404B, Colonels Row, Governors Island, New York

May 5-August 6, 2023

Open Studio and Walkthrough on Saturday, July 22 at 3-4pm

Curated by Klaudia Ofwona Draber



Sa'dia Rehman, *There isn't a stone I don't remember*, 2022. Video still.

KODA presents a solo exhibition and three-month residency with Queens-born multimedia artist Sa'dia Rehman. Rehman's solo show titled *Desire Lines* will feature a video, works on paper, and an evolving installation. For the past three years, Rehman has been working on a new body of work tracing their family's displacement from their village in Pakistan. Between 1968 and 1976, the family, along with 184 villages were forced to migrate due to the construction of the Tarbela Dam, the second largest earth-filled dam in the world. Like many dam projects in the Global South, the project was funded by the World Bank. This hydroelectric infrastructure was built by the US, British, Italian, French, German and Japanese engineers, architects and designers.

Oftentimes desire lines are imaginary lines marking pathways tracking the movement of people, commerce, and transportation. Rehman's exhibition *Desire Lines* reckons with a global history of displacement in the name of modernity that in turn mutates into climate devastation. In the 10-minute looped experimental video *There isn't a stone I don't remember*, 2022, Rehman reflects on a 2022 journey to the Indus River. Using personalized symbologies, documentation, architecture and landscape, ritual and sound, they memorialize an unwritten history. In several works on paper, including monoprints and ink drawings, Rehman traces the roots of the trauma of the loss of home—physical and emotional—with broken images of mosques, cemeteries, shrines, and the striation on rock formations tracking water levels. During the three-month residency Rehman will create a structure temporary and changing with their time at the residency. The large-scale tent-like structure invokes the possibilities in a time of peril. It is an afterlife of the colonial project of the dam itself.

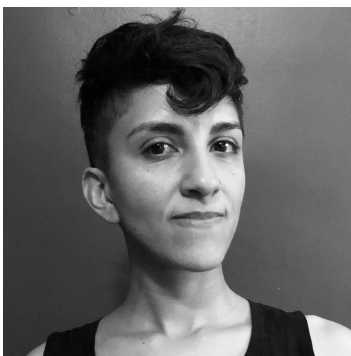
Artist Statement

In my art practice, I try to understand my family history in the context of larger historical processes. In my work I explore structures of the family, the nation, the border. I question how we live within these systems and how they impact who we are, the desire to rearrange, and take them apart. I center familial history to expand on harm and survival, memory, histories, grief, migration, and geographies. I pull apart and put together images from family photographs, historical records and mass media. This is my way of engaging the relationship between public and private structures and memories. I explore how contemporary and historical images communicate, consolidate and contest ideas about gender, empire, migration and labor.

By dismantling, layering and resampling images into various configurations—semblage, collage, wall drawing, installation—I bring attention to and raise questions about the fragmented and hybrid realities in which we live, fight, participate. In my studio, I trace the roots of the trauma of the loss of home—physical and emotional—with images, family interviews and text.

I focus on one image, undo and unlearn it, then build worlds and stories from the broken image. I cut stencils from Tyvek, newsprint, vellum and other paper materials invoking positive and negative space, absence and presence. I transfix the cutouts directly on the wall or paper and continue to layer with hand drawing. I brush, rub and smudge ink, graphite, and charcoal through these cut outs multiple times. Sometimes until they are shredded. The cutouts are both tools and artworks. This repetitive act constitutes a conceptual practice evoking the circular and iterative relationships between history, memory, storytelling, and the self.

Artist Bio



Sa'dia Rehman

Sa'dia Rehman (they/them) is a multidisciplinary artist and educator. Their work explores structures of the family, the nation, the border. They center familial history to expand on harm and survival. Rehman has shared their work at the Columbus Museum of Art, Queens Museum, The Kitchen, Kentler International Drawing Space, Center for Book Arts, Asian/Pacific/American Institute at NYU and Pakistan National Council of the Arts. Rehman was awarded residencies at the Film/Video Studio at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Art Omi, Abrons Art Center, Asian American Arts Alliance, Edward Albee Foundation and AIM Bronx Museum. Their work was featured in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *The Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts*, *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas*, *Colonize This! Young Women of Color On Today's Feminism*, *Breakthru Radio* and *HyperAllergic*. Rehman's solo show is on view at the Wexner Center for the Arts until July 9, 2023.



KODA is a social practice nonprofit arts organization focusing on conceptual mid-career artists ingrained in social justice. KODA offers survey exhibitions as well as tailor-made and community-based artist residencies, through collaborations with socially engaged partners. The nonprofit serves the community with contemporary art events and outreach to strengthen arts education. In its overall mission to support the artistic and professional growth of artists, KODA acts as a laboratory for creative concepts, reflecting its core values of curiosity and collaboration. Website: www.kodalab.org

Instagram

@sasasare
@koda.lab

Twitter

@KODALab_

Hashtags

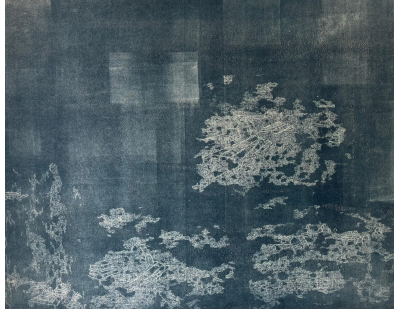
#SadiaRehman
#KODALab

Sa'dia Rehman: Desire Lines

KODA House, Building #404B, Colonels Row, Governors Island, New York

May 5-August 6, 2023

Open Studio and Walkthrough on Saturday, July 22 at 3-4pm



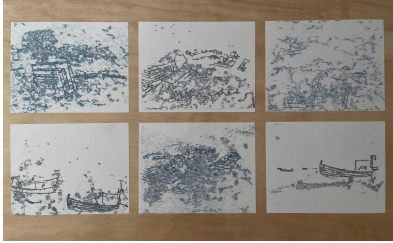


Alphabet of Grief, 2022-3. Monotype on Velin BFK Rives, 21 ¾ x 27 ½ inches each.

Using a stylus, Rehman covers an inked plate with letter size paper and scratches the image of boats, cemeteries and mosques, mango trees, rocks from memory and imagination. They move the letter size paper around the surface of the paper attempting to complete lines and structures. After a moment, Rehman removes the letter size paper, picking up the pigment from the plate, printing the loss of the broken lines. The textures and sediments become memorial imprints on paper, as though Rehman was keeping an archive of these sensorial impressions from their journey along the Indus in 2022.

There are 26 monoprints all individually titled with a letter from the alphabet. At KODA, Rehman exhibits a few. The work is meant to be displayed in a series or individually to emphasize the individual and collective nature of Rehman's work.



There isn't a stone I don't remember, 2022. Video with sound, 10:02. Support provided by the Film/Video Studio at the Wexner Center for the Arts. The following is didactic wall text from the Wex about the video written by curator and Director of Learning and Public Practice at the Wex Dionne Custer Edwards: "Rehman documented imagery for this two-channel video during their travel to Pakistan in 2022. The images as much as the sound threads a history, a process of grieving, life and presence grasping at time: how time is elusive, how life and time transition and meet in ways that are complicated and destabilizing. The journey evokes a line, a material marking and measuring, a drawing or tread in the dirt, sand, silt and earth. This multidimensional work, an interrogation into the effects of colonialism, begins to disrupt the history and rewrite a narrative of the distances between past and future. Rehman often makes from a place of solidarity with their community.

	<p>Using personalized symbolism, documentation, architecture and landscape, ritual and sound, they reveal and memorialize suppressed histories while offering alternative understandings of the present.”</p>
	<p><i>Tracings again</i>, 2022-2023. Oil on printer paper, 8.5 x 11 inches. While making their monoprints, Rehman made hundreds of drawings from memory and imagination of structures and natural formations that once were whole in the the area on the Indus where their family was displaced. This collection of drawings capture the ghosts of the lines for the monoprints. Using letter size paper, Rehman lifted the pigment from the inked plate after drawing cement and stone structures, plant life, rock formations often submerged under water these days.</p>
	<p><i>Desire Lines</i>, 2022. Oil and rust on drawing paper, 8.5 x 11 in each. Similarly to <i>Tracings again</i>, Rehman made 9 drawings from memory of mosques, cemeteries and shrines seen along the Indus River during their journey in 2022. Along with the oil drawings, Rehman wetted steel wire directly on the drawings and paper. Rehman would return to the drawings every day for a month to re-wet the wire and paper. The wires traverse the edges of the paper evoking desire lines, pathways that track the movement of people, commerce, and transportation.</p>
	<p><i>Tent-like</i>, 2023. Materials TBD, possibly rust on cotton fabric, size TBD. <i>Piece will be ready for the Artist Tour on June 3, 2023.</i> While an Artist-in-Residence through the end of July, Rehman will create a temporary structure, evoking a tent. In 2022, Rehman witnessed these temporary structures to be self-governed and made by nomadic people of the area to move with the water levels. These temporary structures invoke the possibilities in a time of peril. This large-scale tent-like structure is a sort of afterlife of the colonial project of the dam itself.</p>