



Left: 'Silent Plea' (2019),  
Saira Wasim.

Right: 'Nabog' (2014),  
Hayv Kahraman.

Below: 'Shah Abbas  
and His Page Boy' (2017),  
Fereydoun Ave.

Bottom: Shadow painting  
by Rashad Alakbarov.



## A means of resistance

Miniature 2.0:  
Miniature in Contemporary Art  
11 August 2020 – 17 January 2021  
Pera Museum, Istanbul  
<https://www.peramuseum.org>

The Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation Pera Museum brings a new exhibition to both traditional and contemporary art lovers during the pandemic period. 'Miniature 2.0: Miniature in Contemporary Art' presents contemporary approaches to miniature painting by 14 artists from different countries. Contemporary miniature goes beyond its former context in terms of form and content; the artists do not treat miniature solely as a historical object, they emphasise its theoretical potential as a contemporary art form.

### 'Contemporary miniature' as a means of resistance

This exhibition traces the rules unique to miniature painting as well as its modern-day conditions. Using various media such as sculpture, video, photography, and installation, the artists give old miniatures new dimensions, and search for ways in which they can reside

in the contemporary world. The works argue for action against the nostalgia that freezes miniatures in time and detach them from their cultural context. Action against the current tendency to problematise the past for a better present and a better future. There are similar creative forms of resistance popping up all around the world, updating the way we see the world, just as the miniatures have been updated.

The exhibition takes contemporary miniature as a means of resistance. Going beyond the familiar East-West comparisons, the works that answer questions about art and society show the audience that other forms of living and thinking are possible. The exhibition creates fertile ground that helps us understand the changing structure of society and repeating patterns as well as notice cultural meanings. It does so by tackling issues such as colonialism, orientalism, economic inequality, gender, identity politics, the struggle against traditional prototypes, social violence, compulsory migration, and representation.

### Miniature as sculpture, video, textile and installation

Saira Wasim's 'Silent Plea' (2019), refers to *Madonna*, the famous nineteenth century painting by the French painter William Bouguereau. In the United States 1300 children are killed by firearms every year, while at the same time the American government has no qualms about meddling with the arms policies of other countries. The work presents a social perception in which guns are more valuable than children.

Fereydoun Ave defines 'Shah Abbas and His Page Boy' (2017) as the borderline between the public and private, and finds inspiration in the miniature of the same name drawn by Muhammad Qasim Musavvir in the seventeenth century, now at the Louvre Museum. This miniature takes a look at the private life of the Shah Abbas, a powerful and fearsome character, and Ave chooses as his material the quilts used in traditional Persian tents for protection against harsh

winters. Everything above the quilt is public, whereas what happens beneath is a mystery.

Rashad Alakbarov, who exhibited his works to large audiences at the Azerbaijan Pavilion during the Venice Biennial in 2013, creates unexpected scenes with found objects. He uses light and shadow as fundamental elements of his works, which can be described as shadow paintings. Appearing to be heaps of metal or plastic objects haphazardly thrown away, these compositions can be seen only with the help of a light source.

In her work entitled 'Nabog' (2014), Hayv Kahraman remembers the house she left behind, the language she forgot, the accent she tried to hide and being 'the other', which she denied. The artist changes the stories in 'Maqamat al Hariri', which was created in the 13th century and features stories mostly about men, to stories about women and strives to create areas of resistance for women today and leave them to the future.

