

# Mughal Miniature Paintings, Nusra Latif Qureshi: Cultural Silhouettes



**Grades:** 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

**Visual Arts**

**Developed By:** Kristen M. Woods

## Lesson Description:

Mughal miniature painting originated during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Mughal Empire which spanned what are now India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. This art form is marked by careful attention of minute detail, lush jewel tones, epic subject matter, and diminutive scale.

This practice grew out of Persian miniature painting and primarily provided visual representation of Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—the use of such sacred subject matter often led to the work itself being seen as sacred. After the fall of the Mughal Empire

the practice became reduced to a copying historical works for the tourist trade in India.

Nusra Qureshi's art revitalizes the centuries-old style of Mughal miniature painting by encouraging her viewer to reevaluate prominent images in the histories of South Asia. She does so by merging historical images with inspiration found in her Australian surroundings. Her works deal with layering both compositionally and within her identity as a Muslim woman, an Asian and a migrant. She layers appropriated imagery from colonial photography, patterns from Middle Eastern textiles or the Arts and Crafts movement, silhouettes and botanical paintings; these elements combine to comprise the backgrounds and foregrounds of isolated female figures.

Students will create their own works that display the dichotomy between the country they live in and another culture.

## Objectives:

- Students will learn about other cultures in relation to American culture
- Students will use silhouette, line and simple imagery to represent the dichotomy between other cultures and the United States

## Materials and Resources:

Construction paper  
Patterned paper  
Bristol board  
Pencils  
Sharpies (various colors)  
Acrylic paint  
Scissors  
Exacto knives  
Glue/glue sticks



Links and books on Nusra Qureshi and Mughal Miniature Painting:

- [http://www.portrait.gov.au/site/exhibition\\_subsite\\_beyondtheself\\_artist.php?artistID=14](http://www.portrait.gov.au/site/exhibition_subsite_beyondtheself_artist.php?artistID=14)
- [http://www.waqaswajahat.com/pages/qureshi\\_main.html](http://www.waqaswajahat.com/pages/qureshi_main.html)
- [http://apt5.asiapacifictriennial.com/artists/artists/nusra\\_latif\\_qureshi](http://apt5.asiapacifictriennial.com/artists/artists/nusra_latif_qureshi)
- Whiles, Virginia. (2010). *Art and Polemic in Pakistan: Cultural Politics and Tradition in Contemporary Miniature Painting*.
- Sloan, Anna. (2004). *The Way I Remember Them: Paintings by Nusra Latif Qureshi*.



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### Critical Questions:

- How do artists express subject matter through silhouette?
- How do artists express their identity in their work?
- What can we learn as artists by studying cultures that are different from our own?

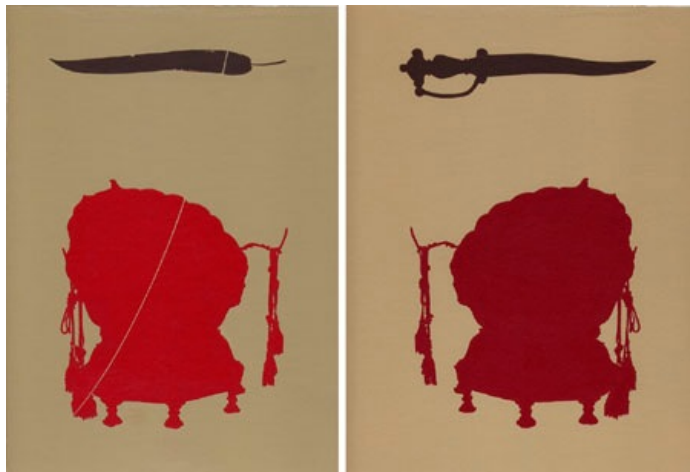
### Activities:

#### Preliminary Discussion:

Discuss the work of Nusra Latif Qureshi and how she often represents part of her own identity juxtaposed to the surroundings she is placed in (i.e. being a Muslim woman living a culture very different from her homeland). Discuss cultural differences with students; their views, how they look upon other cultures as Americans.

#### Art Activity:

- Students will create a diptych or triptych using silhouette, line, and even patterned paper to create a composition the visual compares and contrasts their American culture to that of another countries culture.
- Students should start by thinking about every aspect of their culture from the food we eat, TV we watch, sports we play, religions we practice, laws in our country, and so on. Students should write these aspects down as it will come in handy when they research their outside culture.
- Students will then pick a culture that is different from their own. **Do not let them generalize!** If they choose Middle Eastern Culture, they should pick a specific country, like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. The point of this project is to truly learn about another culture, not to lump one ethnic group together. They should study this culture in regard to the aspects they wrote down about their own country and see how they differ and how they are similar.
- Once students have done their research they should start thinking about how they will represent both unique cultures, and how they will also combine aspects of each culture in silhouette or simple line drawing.



- Using a diptych/triptych style will help when showing a compare and contrast composition. Students should sketch this out first.
- Students will use Bristol board as a base for the silhouette piece. Also, even though this is a silhouette project, students should be encouraged to break away from the traditional black and white composition of silhouette pieces and use color or even patterned paper, whatever they feel will be represent the cultures they are discussing.
- Students will participate in a group critique upon finishing the project.

### Assessment:

- Students have researched aspects of another culture in relation to their own culture
- Students have create a composition using simple silhouette and line
- Students have created a composition that represents the dichotomy between aspects of their own culture and that of another culture

**National Standards:**

**Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

9-12.1 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

9-12.2 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

**Using knowledge of structures and functions**

9-12.1 Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art

9-12.2 Students evaluate the effectiveness of artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions

**Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas**

9-12.1 Students reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture

9-12.2 Students apply subjects, symbols, and ideas in their artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life

**Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures**

9-12.2 Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places

9-12.3 Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making



**More Artists that utilize silhouette:**

**Kara Walker**



Carlos Amorales





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