HIGH LINE ART ANNOUNCES *BETWEEN SALT AND SMOKE*, AN EXHIBITION OF VIDEOS BY SHAHZIA SIKANDER AND ARTIST DUO HYLOZOIC/DESIRES

Sikander and Hylozoic/Desires use hand-drawn animation, performance, and archival material to map the colonial legacies of the British Empire and East India Company across borders and commodities



Installation view of Hylozoic/Desires, *The Hedge of Halomancy*, 2025. Part of *Between Salt and Smoke*. Photo by Liz Devine, courtesy of the High Line.

New York, NY (November 17, 2026)—The video exhibition *Between Salt and Smoke* — three moving-image works by Shahzia Sikander and the artist duo Hylozoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soin & David Soin Tappeser) — is now on view on the High Line. Through animation, performance, and archival excavation, the artists map the sprawling colonial legacies of the British Empire and the East India Company. By examining the monopolization of vital commodities—from opium and

tea to salt—and the violent enforcement of borders across land and sea, the exhibition exposes the mechanisms of colonial extraction while unearthing deep-rooted networks of defiance and anti-colonial dreaming. Organized by Taylor Zakarin, Associate Curator, High Line Art, *Between Salt and Smoke* screens daily from November 17, 2026 through January 11, 2027, on a loop from 12pm to park close, on the High Line in the covered passage at 14th Street.

“Here on the High Line —the structure itself a relic of trade history— Shahzia Sikander’s and Hylozoic/Desires’ films unpack unseemly legacies of trade,” said Taylor Zakarin, Associate Curator for High Line Art. “Together, these three films highlight how the East India Company established the blueprint for modern corporate sovereignty and outsized geopolitical influence. From contested borders to aggressive ecological extraction, this exhibition reveals that today’s crises are not recent anomalies, but the living continuation of colonial enterprise."

Shahzia Sikander’s *3 to 12 Nautical Miles* (2026), shown for the first time in the United States, and *The Last Post* (2010) chart the rise and fall of the East India Company's empire, and are set to scores by New York–based, Pulitzer Prize–winning composer Du Yun. Animated from hand-painted images, *3 to 12 Nautical Miles* navigates the enduring currents of power and trade that have shaped the global landscape from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era. It traces the entangled histories of the British East India Company, Mughal India, and Qing China. At its historical core is Britain’s cultivation of opium in India, its coercive trade with China, and the First Opium War—an interconnected system of imperial extraction that laid bare the profound asymmetries of power between Britain and China. The title refers to the incremental expansion of territorial waters: the legal zone between three and 12 nautical miles from any coastline where sovereignty can be asserted, contested, and enforced.

The Last Post, previously presented by CHANEL Culture Fund at The Window in London, centers a Company Man in a red waistcoat, a stand-in representative of the British East India Company’s colonial power. Indian court architecture, Chinese cut-paper silhouettes, and a watercolor map of South Asia all dissolve and reconfigure around him, reflecting the Company’s sprawling influence from the 1600s to the 1800s, where state, military, and mercantile power were indistinguishably intertwined. The title refers to the military bugle call that commemorates fallen soldiers and signals the close of day. Here it underscores the demise of colonial hegemony and the shifting currents of imperial power.

The Hedge of Halomancy (2025) echoes poignantly on the High Line's elevated greenway. The artist duo Hylozoic/Desires excavate the lost archive of the Inland Customs Line, a 4,000 km-long border—2,500 of which constituted a planted hedge. Imposed by British colonial powers in the 19th century to enforce the Empire's deadly monopoly on salt and to prevent smugglers carrying this invaluable commodity, the Inland Customs Line traversed the Indian subcontinent, separating the British-occupied Bengal Presidency from independent states.

Combining performance, music, and archival material, Hylozoic/Desires work at the threshold of historical records and speculative imaginings. The protagonist, Mayalee, is inspired by a historical courtesan who defied the Empire's attempts to cut off her salary, which was traditionally paid in salt. Using the invaluable mineral to conduct rituals of halomancy (salt divination), her prophecies permeate the hedge. Hylozoic/Desires imagine that they are heard by ornithologist and botanist Allan Octavian Hume, the hedge's British commissioner, who then realizes the consequences of his monstrous creation.

Parts of the hedge were burnt down in an 1857 uprising and eaten by termites. Hume becomes an ally of the Indian liberation movement, co-founding the Indian National Congress. Half a century later, Gandhi, leader of the Congress, stages a Salt March against the British salt monopoly. By 1947, India is free from British rule, but independence comes at a price: the land must be partitioned. The video considers the "hedge" as a poetic and political space, a partition of perforations that continue to fray, tear, and rip into our present. Through the rhythmic blast of brass instruments and the invocation of ancestral memory, *The Hedge of Halomancy* reclaims an infrastructure of violence and transforms it into a garden of resistance.

The Last Post was previously presented in May 2023 by CHANEL Culture Fund at The Window, an ongoing site-specific public art project located in Central London. Publicly available 24 hours a day, the program continues to showcase compelling new work by artists experimenting in cutting-edge digital media.

Between Salt and Smoke presents *3 to 12 Nautical Miles* just ahead of Sikander's solo exhibition at Sean Kelly, New York, in April of 2027, where the video will be shown alongside new work.

ABOUT HIGH LINE ART
Founded in 2009, High Line Art commissions and produces a wide array of artworks on the High Line, including site-specific commissions, exhibitions,

performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Led by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and presented by the High Line, the art program invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the unique architecture, history, and design of the park, and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

For more information on High Line Art, please visit thehighline.org/art.

ABOUT THE HIGH LINE
The High Line is a public park on the West Side of Manhattan operated, maintained, and funded by the nonprofit conservancy Friends of the High Line. Through our work with communities on and off the High Line, Friends of the High Line is devoted to reimagining public spaces to create connected, healthy neighborhoods and cities.

Built on a historic, elevated rail line, the High Line was always intended to be more than a park. You can walk through the gardens, view art, experience a performance, enjoy food or beverage, or connect with friends and neighbors—all while enjoying a unique perspective of New York City.

Nearly 100% of our annual operating budget comes through donations. The High Line is owned by the City of New York, and we operate the park under a license agreement with NYC Parks.

For more information, visit thehighline.org and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok.

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@HighLineArtNYC @shahzia.sikander @himalisinghsoin @davidsointappeser

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MEDIA CONTACT
Janelle Grace | PR & Communications Manager | the High Line
646.774.2536 | janelle.grace@thehighline.org