

# ANILA QUAYYUM AGHA

sundaram tagore gallery  
NEW YORK • SINGAPORE • LONDON



*Flowers (Black and Gold Cutout Diamond)*, 2017,  
mixed media on paper (encaustic gold square stitching and square laser cuts, gold and black beads on black paper), 34 x 30 inches/86.4 x 76.2 cm

Anila Quayyum Agha is a Pakistani-American artist who works in a cross-disciplinary fashion with mixed media. She creates artwork that explores global politics, cultural multiplicity, mass media, and social and gender roles.

Agha is perhaps best known for her immersive, large-scale light installations in which she laser-cuts elaborate patterns into three-dimensional cubes. Suspended and lit from within, the cubes cast lace-like, floor-to-ceiling shadows that transform the surrounding environment, alluding to the richly ornamented public spaces such as mosques that Agha was excluded from as a female growing up in Lahore.

In addition to her suspended light installations, Agha also creates wall-mounted sculptural works, including her *Flowers* series (2018) that explores love and loss inspired by the mixed emotions she experienced following her son's wedding and mother's passing, events that happened in the same year. Although these works may appear decorative, they are imbued with meaning, from the floral patterns that express the beauty and femininity of her mother to the metallic threads commonly used for wedding dresses in Pakistan. The visual elements collectively amplify the interplay between the matrimonial and the funereal, and by extension, the larger cycle of life.

To produce these elaborate works, Agha laser-cuts vibrantly hued encaustic paper with intricate patterns and adorns them with light-reflecting embroidery and beads. These exquisitely detailed drawings are framed within shadow boxes, allowing light to pass through the cut-outs and cast patterned shadows in a manner similar to her large-scale light installations. The framing and shadows allow these works to transcend their two-dimensionality.

Anila Quayyum Agha received a BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore, and an MFA from the University of North Texas. Agha's work has been exhibited in numerous exhibitions including at the Columbia Museum of Art, South Carolina; Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; National Sculpture Museum, Valladolid, Spain; Dallas Contemporary Art Museum, Texas; Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, Florida.

Major awards include the Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship, ArtPrize (Juried and Public Vote Grand Prize 2014), Creative Renewal Fellowship and DeHaan Artist of Distinction (Indy Arts Council), Research Scholar Award (Indiana University), Schiele Prize (Cincinnati Art Museum) and the 2019 Painters and Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation. For the 2019 Venice Biennale, Agha was included in the collateral event *She Persists*. Her work has been collected by institutions and private collectors nationally and internationally.

Born in Lahore, Pakistan, 1965 | Lives and works in Indianapolis, Indiana