



Huma Bhabha

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Huma Bhabha, the *bête noire* of Saatchi's first USA Today show a few years back, has a way with acridly poetic and indelible imagery that one might think virtually extinguished from contemporary art. It's in full effect in the Pakistani-born artist's first London solo show, first of all in a trio of archaic-looking statues. Two of them look female (on the third, the jury's out); all are carved from cork, violently scored and burnt. One has a hooked chin and is almost laughing, its torso decorated with an inscrutable pink-and-blue design; another has breasts like folded wings and an eroded face. Referencing frontal sculptures of antiquity, they seem excavated from some long-gone civilisation and seemingly play on a fear of ambiguous otherness.

Elsewhere, alongside ten drawings that are mostly studies in shifty malevolence, Bhabha decentres documentary imagery: she paints over blow-ups of desert landscapes, tinting them a bloody red and, in one image, floating a pale, vast apparition over the mountains and dust. A sculptural tableau, 'Bumps in the Road', features two hacked together 'figures', one, virtually all head, made from chicken wire, polystyrene and clay, the other little more than a pair of legs made from lengths of timber. One thinks, given the title, of everything from specific threats (eg landmines) to widescreen notions of human suffering, and recognises that this is Bhabha's gift: to leave space aplenty for uneasy reverie, and to make the dreaming mandatory.