

## Digital Drawing Room: MFA Fine Arts featuring Aliya Parashar

Interviewed by Lauren Sorresso



Starting May 10, you can view work by students in the MFA graduating class on the website [2021.CCAMFA.art](https://2021.CCAMFA.art) and in the [Class of 2021 Showcase](#).

Works in this series were written by students in Glen Helfand and Maria Porges' respective graduate writing seminars this past fall and spring.



*Blooming Yantra*

**Aliya Parashar** is an interdisciplinary artist who combines research, craft and writing to construct intricate works that explore the effects of bodies in space. In her Instagram bio, she describes a desire "to carve trans feminine divine". Parashar weaves together complex ideas and histories, layering materials to create atmospheres of reflection.

**Lauren Sorresso:** When did you start working with the yantra? Was it last year, when you lost the studio space needed to make installations?

**Aliya Parashar:** I've been thinking about the yantra for a long time now. It's a meditative mystical device that's a very consistent reference point in Hindu mythology. It resides where intersections meet and repeat — the reverence hidden in small gestures. It was used as a blueprint for temple structures in India. The direct translation from Sanskrit is machine.

**LS:** Did that emerge from your work with gardens?

**AP:** Yes, I was researching garden structures at that time, how the British colonials took gardens from native Indian people in order to have spaces free from the harmful health effects of industrialization. That led me to architecture studies, and I started playing with how to arrange garments in space similar to a yantra. I believe it's possible to incorporate divinity into space by how objects are placed.

**LS:** You refer to the garments in your works as bodies, right? How does your fashion background influence your art practice?

**AP:** All my work is hand-done. I dye all the cloth myself and cut everything on a bias. I like how things drape and stretch on a bias, how they're hard to grasp — it's really a trans cut. I imply myself into the spaces. I want to imbue life into the materials. I don't know if you noticed but I list grieving and other emotions as materials in my descriptions. Those elements are important to my process.



*Khaaka*



*Sona Ka Yantra*

**LS:** Do you see the yantra in a similar way? Does it have that same connection to self?

**AP:** I think about the yantra as a hyper self-reference. It becomes a divine visual language that's chaotic and meditative. There's a myth of the wounded woman, a goddess whose fallen body became a temple in the ground. It's such an interesting way to talk about orientation; the body as architecture. I thought, what if I insert my body into this space? I started with a digital image, then layered and collaged the fragments. I've also painted a yantra with materials that adorn the body. I crocheted one. I drew some. I folded some. I made transfer rubbings. I made one with flowers and beeswax. I made one with mirrors and negative space. I'm making one with stained glass, thinking about how we recognize divine spaces. They don't just appear, they reveal themselves. Yet I still wonder, is there a way to create something beautiful that's truly transforming?