

Whale-under-construction

a visual narrative between the nonhuman, Sufi myth and the urban imaginary (a work in progress)

Naiza Khan visual artist

September 2021



Whale
2014 watercolour and graphite on paper 46 x 61cm



Whale-under-construction 2012
Brass
12 x 30 x 12cm



Collapse 2010
Watercolour, digital print and ink
40.5 x 51cm



Whale-under-construction
2015 Oil on canvas 132 x 200cm

Whales, mythical and actual, populate the waters that lap [Manora] island's desolate shores and reappear, always dead, sometimes decomposing, in Khan's paintings, watercolours and small objects. Every year, confused, dying whale sharks are beached in the old harbour leaving the formidable task of disposing of their remains.

[Khan takes the whale and] the traditional story of Morriro and the Treacherous Sea, as related by the Sindhi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689–1752) in *Risalo*, his compilation of local Hindu and Muslim legends. In this Sufi tale of the self and the world, handicapped Morriro stays at home while his six brothers go fishing until, one day, they are swallowed by a giant whale.

Morriro asks blacksmiths to build him a giant cage of steel and glass, with hooks and blades on its outside, into which he climbs to be lowered into the treacherous straight between Karachi and Manora [Island]. The whale swallows the cage and the blades hook into its mouth; the fishermen reel in the monster to meet its end. Morriro climbs out of the whale unharmed and cuts open its belly where, deep inside its guts, he finds his brothers' bones.

In the Guts of the Whale: Image and Revelation in the work of Naiza Khan
David Elliot. Catalogue essay, *Ongoing Undoing*, Rossi & Rossi, 2015
<https://www.naizakhan.com/category/catalogues/>



February 07, 2012

KARACHI: The 40-foot long whale shark, weighing about 6-7 tons, was found dead in Arabian Sea in the port city of Karachi. It was sold for Rs1.7million on Tuesday.

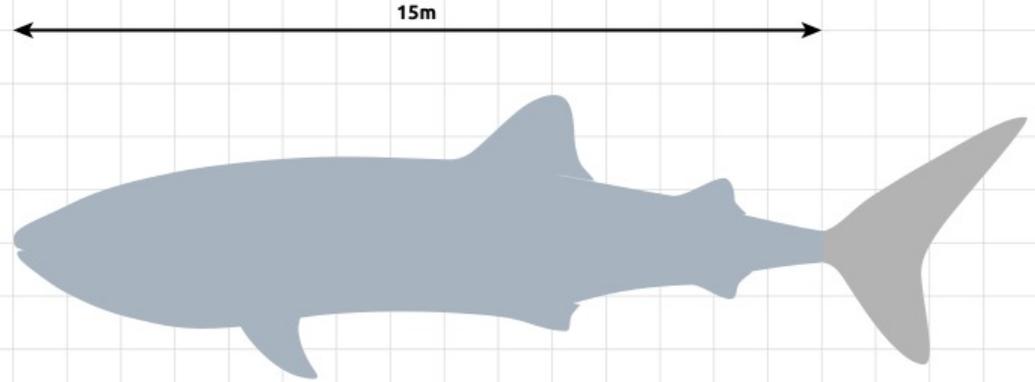
Two cranes were called in to fish the dead whale shark out of the water, which was approximately 40 to 50-feet long and six-feet wide. Both cranes failed to pull out the fish and were sent back as at least three more cranes were required to carry out the task.

reported *Express News*

Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*)

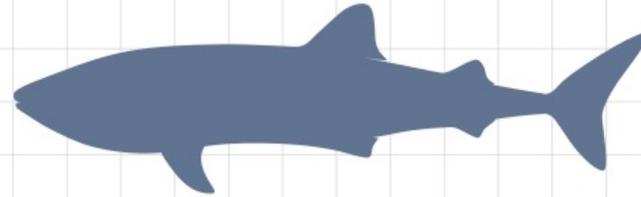
Very Large Adult
- Borrell et al. 2011

'15m SL'
(~18.8m est. TL)



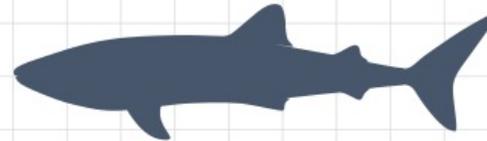
Large Adult
- Kaikini et al. 1959

'12.1m'



Mature Adult

~9m



Juvenile
- Silas & Rajagopalan 1963

'5.62m'



Pup
- Wolfson 1983

'0.55m'





Fath-e-Mubarak (Blessed Conquest),1843

2011

ink and watercolour on Arches. 36 x 51 cm

(see link. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/123019/blessed-conquest-ran-between-karachi-and-thatta-for-the-british-historian-mubarak-ali>)



- (L) Land Hunger 2015, watercolour on paper 46 x 61cm
- (R) From the Wreckage 2015, watercolour on paper 46 x 61cm



Beached
(Objects from the Deep) 2017

Conte, graphite, charcoal and screen print on Magnani paper 70 x 100 cm



The streets are Rising 2013
Oil on canvas, 200 x 256cm



Between the temple and the playground 2011
Oil on canvas, 200 x 270cm

Links

[First insights into the horizontal movements of whale sharks \(Rhincodon typus\) in the northern Arabian Sea](#)

Frontiers in Marine Science, July 2021

[Distribution, abundance and mortality of whale sharks \(Rhincodon typus\) in coastal and offshore waters of Pakistan \(Northern Arabian Sea\): Review of a ten year study with informati...](#)

[New records of neonatal and juvenile whale shark \(Rhincodon typus\) from the Indian Ocean](#)

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/123019/blessed-conquest-ran-between-karachi-and-thatta-for-the-british-historian-mubarak-ali>

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