



WHO BUILT THE CITY?

This drawing gathers the fragments of a city that has long existed between visibility and erasure. The composition deliberately resists a singular reading. Architecture dissolves into landscape, landscape opens into ritual, rituals transform into memory, and memory slips into myth. Plans become sections, sections become illustrations, and historical realities coexist with imagined worlds. In doing so, the drawing rejects the clarity and order often expected of architectural representation. Its discomfort is intentional.

Yet the unease extends beyond the drawing itself. Across the image, women occupy spaces from which they have repeatedly been excluded in dominant narratives. They dance beside religious monuments, inhabit public courtyards, gather within landscapes of cultural memory, and appear at the centre of urban life rather than at its margins. These positions are not fictional provocations but reflections of lived histories that have been selectively forgotten, concealed, or rewritten.

For centuries, fingers have been pointed toward the women of Heera Mandi. This drawing turns that gaze back upon the city itself. What emerges is a different understanding of infrastructure. Not one built solely through walls, roads, and monuments, but one sustained through performance, care, memory, craftsmanship and ritual. The women represented throughout this bestiary are not merely participants within the city; they are among its makers. Their practices have carried knowledge across generations, shaped cultural identities, and continuously produced forms of urban life despite repeated attempts at erasure. The drawing therefore remains unresolved.

It offers no solution, no redemption, and no comfortable ending. Instead, it stands as an act of witnessing. A reminder that beneath the visible city lies another city, constructed through rituals, sustained through memory, and carried by the women whose histories continue to endure despite every effort to make them disappear..

Title: Women as Hidden Infrastructure

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Type: Illustration

Method: Synthesis of historical, visual, ethnographic, and scholarly research

Medium: Digital Drawing

Source: Author's illustration synthesizing multiple historical, visual, ethnographic, archival, and academic sources related to Heera Mandi, women's cultural practices, ritual networks, performance traditions, and urban heritage.

See bibliography for complete references.