



The Ackland Art Museum Shines Spotlight on Art of the Middle East and North Africa with Two Events: Exhibition “She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World” and Installation of Recently Acquired Islamic Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Chapel Hill, N.C. — Aug 14, 2019) — The Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill shines a spotlight on art of the Middle East and North Africa with an exhibition of contemporary photography by women artists and an installation of recent acquisitions of Islamic art. The exhibition “She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World,” is on view from Friday, Sept. 20 through Sunday, Dec. 1, 2019. The

Ackland's new acquisitions of Islamic Art will be on view in a separate installation from Friday, Sept. 13, 2019 through Sunday, Feb. 2, 2020.

"She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World" brings together the vital pioneering work of 12 leading artists, ranging in genre from portraiture to documentary: Jananne Al-Ani, Boushra Almutawakel, Gohar Dashti, Rana El Nemr, Lalla Essaydi, Shadi Ghadirian, Tanya Habjouqa, Rula Halawani, Nermine Hammam, Rania Matar, Shirin Neshat, and Newsha Tavakolian. During this critical time for Iran and the Arab world, as national and personal identities are being dismantled and rebuilt, contemporary photography reflects the complexities of unprecedented change. One of the most significant trends to emerge is the work of women photographers, whose remarkable and provocative images provide insights into new cultural landscapes, questioning tradition and challenging perceptions of Middle Eastern and Arab identity. The exhibition features over 80 photographs lent by the artists; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the collection of James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach.

"This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to present the work of these 12 exceptional artists for the first time at the Ackland," said Katie Ziglar, director of the Museum. Ziglar holds an M.A. in Islamic art and architecture from the American University in Cairo. "With origins in 8 countries — Iran, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Yemen — these artist-storytellers present richly varied and intriguing narratives that have only recently come to international attention. In bringing this exhibition to North Carolina, we affirm the Ackland's enduring interest in connecting with the beauty and complexity of a big world."



"She Who Tells a Story" has drawn one glowing review after another at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and subsequent venues. The New York Times declared, "This exhibition doesn't tell one story — it tells many." The Huffington Post called the exhibition "revelatory." CAA

Reviews proclaimed that, "The many standout artworks ... [bring] to the fore the intertwined problems of class, subjectivity, public and private space, power, and the everyday with a mix of imagination, humor and directness." The Economist observed that, "At a time when American and European views of the Islamic world tend to be filtered through a lens of fear and anxiety, these images offer a more nuanced portrait of a culturally complicated place." The Ackland Art Museum at UNC-Chapel Hill will be the final stop for the exhibition, and its only appearance in the Southeast. The exhibition was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Ackland presents the following programs in connection with "She Who Tells a Story":

FEATURED EVENT

Artist Talk: Photographer Rania Matar

Wednesday, Oct 23 | 7 PM

Free and open to the public; RSVP at ackland.org

Through Her Lens: Modern Arab Women Telling Their Stories in Art and Literature at the Ackland

Friday, Oct 11 | 6:30-8:30 PM

Featuring the 2019 Man Booker Prize-winner "Celestial Bodies" by Jokha Alharthi (translator Marilyn Booth). Cohosted by Carolina Public Humanities. Ticket info at ackland.org

Photo Books Pop-Up: Rare and Special Photo Books from the Sloane Art Library Collection

Friday, Nov 8 | 6-8:30 PM

Free and open to the public.

Ackland Film Forum: Recent Films by Arab Women Filmmakers

Tuesdays at the Varsity Theatre | 7 PM

Full schedule and ticket info at ackland.org

Family and Friends Sunday

Sunday, Oct 27 | 2-5 PM

Free and open to the public.

Additional events such as guided tours, panel discussions, concerts, films, and art-making for children will be announced on the Ackland's website in the coming weeks.

In related news, the Ackland recently launched a major initiative to build its collection of art from the Islamic world. A small exhibition, presented in conjunction with "She Who Tells a Story," will showcase seven recent purchases, including calligraphic manuscripts, textiles, metalwork and an architectural fragment all dating from the 8th century CE to the 17th century. There will be one rotation of the textiles and Qur'anic manuscripts on Friday, November 22, midway through the show.



Admission to the Ackland is always free.

[Click here for high-resolution images and an exhibition checklist for “She Who Tells a Story”](#)

[Click here for a high-resolution file of an object from the new installation of recently acquired Islamic art.](#)

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About the Ackland Art Museum: Featuring a year-round calendar of special exhibitions and dynamic public programs, the Ackland Art Museum on UNC-Chapel Hill’s historic campus is a local museum with a global outlook that bridges campus and community. Admission to the Ackland is free and accessible to all. The Ackland’s holdings include nearly 19,000 works of art. The collection spans all cultures and time periods, showcasing the breadth of human creativity. A vital teaching resource, the museum’s mission is the art of understanding. Visitors can connect with the complexity and beauty of the wider world by getting close to art—the familiar, the unexpected, the challenging. The Ackland Art Museum is located at 101 South Columbia St. on the UNC Chapel Hill campus. Museum hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 AM - 5 PM, and Sundays 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. The museum is open until 9 p.m. for Chapel Hill-Carrboro’s monthly 2nd Friday ArtWalk. More information is available at ackland.org.

Image credits:

Newsha Tavakolian, Iranian, born 1981: *Don't Forget This Is Not You (for Sahar Lotfi)*, 2010. Photograph, pigment print, 12 3/16 x 12 3/16 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Gohar Dashti, Iranian, born 1980: *Untitled #5*. From the series *Today's Life and War*, 2008. Pigment print, 27 9/19 x 41 5/16 in. Courtesy of the artist, Azita Bina and Robert Klein Gallery, Boston.

Unidentified artist, probably Iraqi, Baghdad, Jalayirid dynasty (1336 – 1432): Leaf from the “5 Surahs” Qur’anic Album, c. 1370. Ink and gold on paper, 17 × 13 3/4 in. (43.2 × 35 cm). Special Acquisition Fund, 2019.16.1

