

Contact:  
Marni McEntee  
Director of Communications  
Cell: 608.515.0137  
[marni@mmoca.org](mailto:marni@mmoca.org)



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MEDIA RELEASE: January 12, 2022

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## THE MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART RECEIVES A GRANT FROM THE ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS FOR UPCOMING FAISAL ABDU'ALLAH EXHIBITION

Faisal Abdu'Allah's exhibition will be shown in two parts at MMoCA. *DARK MATTER* will open Sept. 17, 2022, preceded by a public artwork entitled *Blu³eprint*.

MADISON, WI— The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) is honored to announce that it has been selected for a significant grant award from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts to support an upcoming exhibition by British artist Faisal Abdu'Allah (b. 1969, London), who is based in Madison, Wisconsin. *DARK MATTER*, opening September 17, 2022, explores cultural representation and the systems of power that structure our experiences of the world.



>  
Faisal Abdu'Allah, *The Duppy Conqueror* (triptych), 2017. Jacquard tapestries, 117 x 60 inches, each. Courtesy of the artist.

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*DARK MATTER* includes a selection of the artist's most celebrated series, as well as a reconstruction of *Garden of Eden* (2003), an architectural installation the artist created in collaboration with renowned architect Sir David Adjaye. Exploring issues of privilege, exclusion, and the voyeuristic gaze, this interactive piece separates visitors based on genetic traits—in this case, eye color—in order to undermine our perceptions of difference and alienation. With *Garden of Eden*, Abdu'Allah points to the

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privileges conferred to certain people based on the nuances of their genetic matter.

In other works Abdu'Allah uses human hair, a carrier of DNA, and focuses on the ritual of cutting hair. Abdu'Allah is also a trained barber, a profession he has fully integrated into his artistic practice, most notably through his community-based *Live Salon* performances (2006-present). During each *Live Salon* session, he provides free haircuts to willing museum visitors and engages them in open-ended conversations about issues surrounding contemporary social identity and representation. In *Hair Traits* (2016-present), Abdu'Allah uses participants' actual hair, which he blends into a fine powder to render their portrait on paper. Regarding his use of human hair, he explains, "Essentially, it brings their DNA, their identity, into the work. Our hair carries a trace of who we are, and it is extremely political. In the history of post-colonialism, the straighter your hair was, the higher up on the chain of respect you were."

*DARK MATTER* will also feature a counter-monument by Abdu'Allah, which he first conceived of several years ago in response to debates about the role of monuments and their removal from public view. His solution was to commission artists of color to create new monuments that represent their own aesthetics, histories, and experiences. Commissioned by MMoCA, *Blu<sup>3</sup>eprint* was realized in collaboration with the fine arts team at Quarra Stone Company in Madison and Italy-based master stone carver and sculptor Martin Foot. The counter-monument will be prominently placed at MMoCA as a public work of art.

The mission of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts is the advancement of the visual arts. The foundation manages an innovative and flexible grants program while also preserving Warhol's legacy through creative and responsible licensing policies and extensive scholarly research for ongoing catalogue raisonné projects. To date, the foundation has given nearly \$260 million in cash grants to over 1,000 arts organizations in 49 states and

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abroad. “We are honored to receive a grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts in support of Faisal Abdu’Allah’s exhibition, *DARK MATTER*. Their support not only makes it possible for us to share the work with our visitors, but also provides a wonderful opportunity for expanding awareness of Abdu’Allah’s incredible social and artistic practice,” said Christina Brungardt, the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art’s Gabriele Haberland Director.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Faisal Abdu’Allah is a British-born, Wisconsin-based artist and barber. He studied in London at the Royal College of Art. He is Professor of Printmaking and Associate Dean for the Arts in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2021, Abdu’Allah was named the Chazen Family Distinguished Chair in Art at UW-Madison.



#### ABOUT MMoCA

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art’s vision is to be an organization that fosters the exchange of ideas and creates experiences that will inspire a wide audience; be a nexus for the work of emerging and established regional, national, and international artists; serve as a catalyst for the continued development of a vigorous community of artists; and provide a forum that will encourage people to be challenged by, reflect on, and make connections between art and the world around them.

The Museum includes four galleries and The Shop, a space to provide interactive contemporary art experiences and educational workshops to the community. The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an

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incredible view which serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, dining, and cinema.

MMoCA's galleries are open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from noon to 6 PM. Please visit [mmoca.org](http://mmoca.org) to learn more.

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