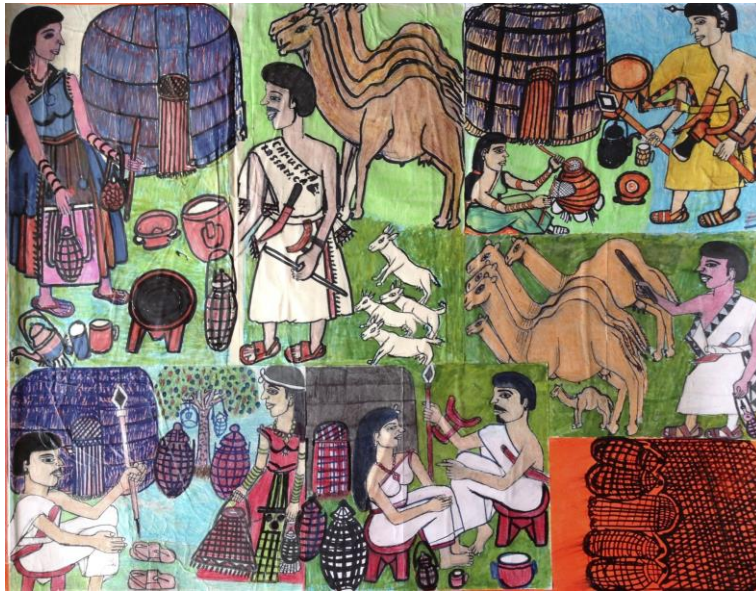


PRESS RELEASE

The Minneapolis Institute of Art Announces its First Exhibition of Work by Contemporary Somali Artists

Three artists will present drawings, paintings, and film as they examine themes of identity and culture

Minneapolis Institute of Art
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
artsmia.org



Hassan Nor (b. 1937)
Untitled ("Vignettes of Life in Somalia")
Color marker on paper;
Collection of the artist

Minneapolis, July 25, 2017— The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) will present “I Am Somali: Three Visual Artists from the Twin Cities,” an exhibition that celebrates the work of Hassan Nor, Aziz Osman, and Ifrah Mansour. The artists share stories of exile, memory, identity, pride, and resilience through drawings, paintings, and film, displayed alongside traditional objects illustrating daily life in Somalia. On view August 19, 2017, to April 29, 2018, this exhibition marks the first time Mia will show work by contemporary Somali artists.

“Minneapolis is home to the largest Somali community in the U.S.,” said Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers, Head of the Arts of Africa and the Americas and Curator of African Art at Mia. “It is an honor to showcase three generations of Somali artists who live in the Twin Cities. Their work counters the widely held idea that art by Muslims is non-figural, and they examine identity in a personal, vulnerable way, which is recognizable across cultures and religions.”

Nor and Osman were born in Somalia and grew up there, migrating to the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s after the outbreak of civil war at home. Their drawings and paintings look to the past, depicting life in Somalia before the war and on their way to the U.S. Mansour, meanwhile, was born in Saudi Arabia and raised in Minnesota. Her video addresses the cultural ignorance and stereotypes she encounters in her daily life.

To add context to the contemporary artwork, Mia is collaborating with the [Somali Museum of Minnesota](http://SomaliMuseum.org) (SMM) to showcase five traditional objects illustrating daily life in Somalia. The artifacts include milk containers, a pair of sandals, a camel bell, and a Qur’an stand.

Mia

The exhibition's title comes from a poem by Abdulkadir Hersi Siyad (1945–2005). In Somalia, poetry has long been the preferred medium for artistic expression; in fact, the country is sometimes called “the land of bards.” This is in part because of Somalia’s long Islamic tradition, which discourages the visual depiction of people but elevates the spoken word. Yet Somali artists have also turned to other media, including drawing, painting, photography, and video.

Programming related to “I Am Somali: Three Visual Artists from the Twin Cities” includes a panel discussion on Thursday, October 26, at 6 p.m. with Nor, Osman, and Mansour about issues they take to heart, such as art-making in Somali society, knowledge of traditional Somalia across generations, and being an immigrant in the United States. The talk will be moderated by University of Minnesota sociologist Cawo Awa Abdi and Ahmed Ismail Yusuf, author of *Somalis in Minnesota*. Tickets are \$10 for the general public; \$5 for My Mia members; and free for African Art Affinity Group members. For reservations or information, call (612) 870-3000.

About the artists

Hassan Nor, born in southern Somalia, is in his 80s. A self-taught artist, he has drawn since he was 19. He began life as a pastoralist, raising goats, cows and camels; later, he lived on a farm and worked as a tailor. He fled his homeland and resettled in the U.S. in 2002. His drawings depict narratives of daily life before the Somali Civil War that started in 1991, and also scenes of exile and migration. This is his first museum exhibition.

Aziz Osman, born in northern Somalia, is in his 60s. He grew up in Mogadishu, the country’s capital. In 1968, he received a scholarship to study in Florence, Italy. After graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts, he lived in Italy and traveled through Europe until 1989. He returned to Somalia, where he found inspiration and acclaim for his work, but when the war broke out he was forced to leave the country. He arrived in Minnesota in 1991 as part of the first wave of Somalis to resettle here. His work is both figural, depicting traditional life in Somalia, and semi-abstract, with colorful, geometrical shapes. Osman’s work has been shown at the Somali Museum of Minnesota, the African Development Center, the Midtown Global Market (where he did a mural), and Public Art St. Paul.

Ifrah Mansour, born in Saudi Arabia and raised in Minneapolis, is in her 30s. She is a multi-disciplinary artist, working in a variety of mediums including poetry, performance, puppetry, installations, and the visual arts. She likes to interweave text, movement, and sound to create multisensory stories that illuminate the experiences of under-represented communities. Through exploring identity, trauma, and place, her immersive artworks connect and bridge different cultures and generations. Her piece in the show, *Can I Touch It*, is a multimedia installation of film, audio, fabric, and willow branches. The work intimately examines the mundane acts of transgression towards people of color and Muslim women.

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About The Minneapolis Institute Of Art

Home to more than 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday 10am–5pm

Thursday, Friday 10am–9pm

Sunday 11am–5pm

Monday Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

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