

Contact:
Marni McEntee
Director of Communications
Direct: 608.257.0158 ext. 241
marni@mmoca.org

MEDIA RELEASE: April 5, 2022

MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS *DARK MATTER*, AN EXHIBITION FEATURING CELEBRATED WORKS BY MADISON-BASED ARTIST FAISAL ABDU'ALLAH

MADISON, WI—Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) will present *DARK MATTER*, an exhibition by British artist Faisal Abdu'Allah (b. 1969, London). Opening September 17, 2022, the exhibition explores personal identity, cultural representation, and self-determination.

DARK MATTER will be on view September 17, 2022-April 2, 2023.

Exhibition Celebration
Friday, September 16
Reception | 5-8 PM
Artist Talk | 6:30-7:30 PM
Free admission

>

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



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. It is the first time that *Garden of Eden* will be exhibited in the United State. Exploring issues of privilege, exclusion, and the voyeuristic gaze, this interactive work 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

mmoca.org

[@fauhaus](https://www.instagram.com/fauhaus)

[@mmocamadison](https://www.instagram.com/mmocamadison)

Contact:
Marni McEntee
Director of Communications
Direct: 608.257.0158 ext. 241
marni@mmoca.org



MEDIA RELEASE: April 5, 2022

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 *Live Salon* performances (2006–present). During each *Live Salon* session, he provides free haircuts to willing participants 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.”

As a prelude to *DARK MATTER*, a stone counter-monument titled *Blu³eprint* was installed outside the Museum in February 2022. Abdu'Allah first conceived of the sculpture several years ago in response to debates about the role of monuments and their removal from public view. His solution was that institutions commission an array of artists to create new monuments that represent their own histories, aesthetics, and experiences. Commissioned by MMoCA, *Blu³eprint* was realized in collaboration with the fine arts team at Quarra Stone Company in Madison and Italy-based stone carver and sculptor Martin Foot. The counter-monument is installed in front of MMoCA on one of the city's most prominent thoroughfares as a public work of art.

Blu³eprint has recently been accessioned into MMoCA's Permanent Collection, thanks to a partial gift from Faisal Abdu'Allah, Quarra Stone, and the Gabriele Haberland Permanent Collection Fund.

Contact:
Marni McEntee
Director of Communications
Direct: 608.257.0158 ext. 241
marni@mmoca.org

MEDIA RELEASE: April 5, 2022

DARK MATTER was organized by former MMoCA Curator of Exhibitions Leah Kolb.

Presenting Sponsorship for *DARK MATTER* has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support has been provided by Dane Arts with additional funds from the Endres Mfg. Company Foundation, the Evjue Foundation, Inc., charitable arm of the Capital Times, the W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation, and the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation.

Please visit mmoca.org for a complete list of Museum programs relating to this exhibition.

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 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2019 Mayor of London Award, 2016 Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant Program for Painters and Sculptors, 2012 Mayors prize for sustainability for his film *Double Pendulum*, Decibel Visual Artist Award, London, and First Prize at the Tallinn Print Triennial, Estonia.



Abdu'Allah is the Honorary Professor, University of Bedfordshire (UK). In 2021, he was named the Chazen Family Distinguished Chair in Art at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

ABOUT MMoCA

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art offers free daily admission. Its vision is to be an organization that

Contact:
Marni McEntee
Director of Communications
Direct: 608.257.0158 ext. 241
marni@mmoca.org



MEDIA RELEASE: April 5, 2022

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 Museum's Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view which serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, music, and cinema.

MMoCA's galleries are open Thursday-Sunday from 12-6 PM. Please visit mmoca.org to learn more.

###