

#ImmigrationSparks



AGA KHAN MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE

Aga Khan Museum celebrates the creativity, artistic contributions of newcomers with season focused on stories of immigration

Season of Immigration will feature 51 visual artists, 15 performances, and 10 speakers, representing more than 50 countries around the world.

Toronto, February 24, 2020 — The Aga Khan Museum will venture beyond the headlines about surging global migration with a new season celebrating the artistic contributions of immigrants and refugees.

The Museum's upcoming Season of Immigration features three exhibitions that showcase the creativity of migrants and the artistic contributions they are making around the world. Accompanied by a global lineup of performing artists and thought leaders, these cutting-edge shows shine a spotlight on extraordinary individuals who use art and culture to overcome adversity, build lives, and enrich their communities in the face of mass displacement, climate change, and economic upheaval.

"In our era of unprecedented global migration, we at the Aga Khan Museum believe we have a duty to challenge narratives that cast immigrants and refugees as a threat to the integrity our communities," says Henry S. Kim, the Museum's Director and CEO. "As residents of Canada, we benefit enormously from welcoming newcomers and the perspectives they bring. By seizing opportunity in defiance of adversity, they embody the best of the human spirit."

The Museum's Winter/Spring 2020 season features 51 visual artists, 15 performances, and 10 speakers, representing more than 50 countries worldwide. Many are immigrants or refugees themselves, while others are descendants of recent immigrants. "We are proud to amplify the voices of artists and thinkers with deeply personal connections to migration," says Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, the Museum's Director of Collections and Public Programs. "Their stories, and the artistic practices they inspire, have much to tell us about how immigration can enhance and enrich society."

Bringing forward human stories of immigration and migration is part of the Museum's ongoing efforts to promote understanding between communities and cultures. "We invite visitors to embrace the power of art to build bridges between people of disparate backgrounds and belief systems," says Kim. "Art, in its most potent forms, instills a heightened understanding of our shared humanity, fosters personal connections, and pierces through the constructed barriers of race, nationality, and ideology."

Highlights of the Museum's Winter/Spring 2020 program include:

#ImmigrationSparks



AGA KHAN MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE



Exhibition

DON'T ASK ME WHERE I'M FROM

Feb 25, 2020–Apr 13, 2020

In this innovative collaboration between the Aga Khan Museum and the Luciano Benetton Foundation's Imago Mundi, 15 artists from around the world navigate their blended identities and act as emissaries between the cultures they inhabit. All the artists use their chosen art forms — including painting, textiles, sculpture, conceptual art, multimedia, and calligraffiti — to visualize the complex ways an individual's ancestral past interacts with the realities of their present and the promise of the future.



Exhibition

SANCTUARY

Mar 21, 2020–Aug 23, 2020

Thirty-six contemporary artists, including Mona Hatoum, Brendan Fernandes, and Ai Weiwei, meditate on the theme of sanctuary through the unexpected medium of traditionally woven rugs. These arresting artworks challenge viewers to think about sanctuary in the context of conflict, mass migration, and the personal quest to arrive and belong. Shrouding the rugs will be a bespoke gallery design by MIT-based artist Dr. Azra Akšamija. Composed of more than 2,000 used t-shirts donated to the Museum, these waves of shredded fabric conjure images of temporary shelters and comment on the global impact of our buy-now-throw-away-later consumer culture. A newly commissioned score by Afghan-American rebab master Qais Essar will

construct a sonic landscape for visitors touring the space.



Exhibition

CHRYSALIS

Mar 21, 2020–Aug 23, 2020

Presented as a companion to *Sanctuary*, this portrait series celebrates the tenacious individuality of refugee women living precarious existences in Greece. For *Chrysalis*, artist Olga Stéfátou photographed 11 women in costumes made of foil emergency blankets — created in collaboration with designer Guram Chachanidze — and asked them to reflect upon their journeys to Europe. Together, image and text give the women a platform to present themselves to the world as they wish to be seen: as individuals, each with her own reasons to have fled home, and each with her own expectations and hopes for the future.



Performing Arts

LISTENING TO EACH OTHER

Our 2019/20 Performing Arts season, *Listening to Each Other*, features globally minded creators reimagining music for this new decade, including Polaris Prize winner Jeremy Dutcher and Ukrainian cabaret-folk provocateurs Dakh Daughters. Other performers, including the Fared Ayaz & Abu Muhammad Ensemble, will have new audiences falling in love with centuries-old traditions. This season also boasts a celebration of National Poetry Month, an experimental Sufi performance, and our *2020 Comedy Series* — all of which celebrate cultural exchange and the power of diversity.



Education

IDEAS WITHOUT BORDERS

Our Education programs offer a multifaceted lens through which you can experience a world without walls. Visitors will immerse themselves in illuminating exhibition tours and workshops on poetry, calligraphy, and traditional Malian textiles. Wrapping up in February, our *Caravans of Gold Talk Series* explores the wide-ranging influence of African cultures on artists and their work. In May, three talks inspired by *Sanctuary* will delve deeper into themes highlighted in the exhibition. For the May 31 series finale, Lisa Hageman, a Haida artist specializing in weaving, and Wanda Nanibush, the AGO's Curator of Indigenous Art, will treat audiences to a provocative

discussion on how Indigenous creators are reclaiming sanctuary through the arts.

Meanwhile, making its exclusive Canadian debut at the Aga Khan Museum...



Exhibition

PARADISE GARDEN

THE WAGNER GARDEN CARPET FROM THE BURRELL COLLECTION, GLASGOW

[Feb 11–Aug 16, 2020](#)

This monumental, 17th-century masterpiece from Iran is one of the oldest of its kind still in existence. Measuring an astonishing four-by-five metres, the Wagner Garden Carpet reveals a walled “paradise” garden, resplendent with a fountain, water channels, and a cornucopia of trees, flowers, birds, and other wildlife. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gaze upon one of the most famous works of Islamic art, on temporary loan from the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, UK.

#ImmigrationSparks



AGA KHAN MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Museum's mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage while often reflecting, through both its permanent and temporary exhibitions, how cultures connect with one another. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto's Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

Photo Credits: **1.** Don't Ask Me Where I'm From: *CHEZ-NOUS, LÀ-BAS!* (2019), by eL Seed. Photo by Marco Pavan. **2.** Sanctuary: *Kachachi* (2015), by Hayv Kahraman. Image provided by the FOR-SITE Foundation with the support of ALRUG. **3.** Chrysalis: *Mahboubeh* (2018), by Olga Stéfátou. **4.** Listening to Each Other: Dakh Daughters. Photo by Igor Gaidai. **5.** Ideas without Borders: Photo by Connie Tsang. **6.** Paradise Garden: Detail of the Wagner Garden Carpet. Iran, 17th century. © Burrell Collection, CSG CIC Glasgow Museum Collections.

– 30 –

FOR PRESS INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

Olena Gisys, Porter Novelli
olena.gisys@porternovelli.com
416.422.7152

Kelly Frances, Aga Khan Museum
press@agakhanmuseum.org
416.858.8735