

P R E S S   R E L E A S E

Williams College Museum of Art Presents  
*Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists*

February 12, 2005–May 15, 2005

Williamstown, MA– the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) presents *Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists*. The exhibition, which will be on view from February 12 through May 15, 2005, features the work of major contemporary artists Ghada Amer, Shahzia Sikander, Mona Hatoum, Y. Z. Kami, Jananne Al-Ani, Walid Raad, and Michal Rovner. Hailing from the region stretching from Egypt to Pakistan, the artists have come together in one exhibition to reveal a new kind of intercultural understanding through art. Each artist is represented by several works ranging from large installations and video projections, to prints, sculptures, and miniature paintings. These artists share a connection to both their homelands in the "East" and the places in the "West" where they primarily live and work. Their lives and their art traverse boundaries between these two worlds, dismantling stereotypes and seeking to broaden perceptions on both sides of the global divide.

According to Holly Edwards, Lecturer in Art at Williams College, whose spring course, *Forbidden Image?*, will deal extensively with the exhibition, "All seven of the artists in this exhibition create images that resonate with multiple traditions, reflecting the fracturings and graftings of global visual culture. Image-making for all of them is a process of self-definition in a complex world."

In her photography and video installations, Jananne Al-Ani, a British artist born to an Iraqi father and an Irish mother, explores her family's experiences and memories of war in Iraq, feelings of loss and separation, and the cultural divide between the East and the West that continues to be exacerbated by the popular media.

Ghada Amer, an Egyptian artist living in New York, questions established cultural boundaries of sexuality and gender by superimposing embroidered line drawings of sexually engaged women with painted fields and patterns of vibrant and often contrasting colors.

Drawing upon her own feelings of intimacy, connection, exodus, and alienation, Mona Hatoum, a Palestinian born in Beirut and living in London, addresses the emotional experience of immigration, exile, and the renegotiation of Arab and European identity through minimalist sculpture and installation art.

Y. Z. Kami, an Iranian artist who lives and works in New York, creates large, carefully rendered portraits of unnamed people and abandoned or dilapidated buildings that elicit feelings of humanity, empathy, and familiarity alongside a sense of anonymity, alienation, and transience.

Walid Raad, a Lebanese artist living in New York, creates fictional visual analyses of seemingly factual events through multimedia installations that comment upon the memory, interpretation, and re-examination of contemporary Lebanese history.

Michal Rovner, an artist who works in both New York and Israel, digitally manipulates and distorts photographic images and videos to eliminate specific references to race, nationality, place, gender, and ethnicity, thereby evoking thoughts of illicit border crossings, deterritorialization, and genetic experimentation.

Born in Pakistan and now living in New York, Shahzia Sikander infuses the techniques, iconography, and media of traditional South Asian miniature painting with personal symbols, contemporary motifs, and multicultural religious iconographies to explore the conventions of the past in a globalized and contemporary context.

*Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists* is organized by the Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. David O'Brien, Program Chair and Associate Professor of Art History at the university and co-curator of the exhibition explains, "The art in this show addresses various experiences of travel, exile, diaspora, alienation, and integration, feelings of longing and belonging, memories of places and people, encounters with divergent views of sexuality and gender, alternate political understandings of the world, and cultural practices that both divide and unite us."

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated, full-color catalogue featuring essays by co-curators David O'Brien and David Prochaska and excerpts from conversations with the artists. The catalogue is available through the Museum Shop: (413) 597-3233.

## **Related Events**

Gallery Talk: "The Book of Kings" and "Beyond East and West"

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

4:00 pm

Peter Low, Assistant Professor of Art, and Holly Edwards, Lecturer in Art, will discuss the connection between these two new exhibitions at WCMA.

### **WCMA Celebrates the Winter Exhibitions**

Reception

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

5:00 pm-6:00 pm

### **Gallery Talk @ 12:10**

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

Lisa Dorin, Assistant Curator, WCMA and Katarzyna Pieprzak, Assistant Professor of Francophone Literature and French Language, on "Beyond East and West"

12:10 pm-12:50 pm

### **Publicity Images Available**

Publicity images for *Beyond East and West* and other current exhibitions are available for use.