

EDUCATOR GUIDE



Baseera Khan: Weight on History

September 30, 2022 – September 25, 2023

Not for Public Use or Dissemination



Welcome!

Dear Educators,

We are thankful for you to join us, as the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) brings you the work of Bassera Khan on the second floor gallery from September 30, 2022-September 25, 2023.

Do not let the size of the gallery fool you into over-simplifying or overlooking this exhibit. Like the hand-crafted collages on view, each visit to *Weight on History* will peel back another fascinating layer of the artist, rewarding repeat visitors. Combining familiar materials and objects in unexpected ways, Khan challenges us to confront our stereotypes about Islamic art and culture: along the continuum of curious, to fearful, and the complicated feelings in between. Under the glow of dancing shadows cast by her custom “disco” chandelier, Khan draws the gazing eye down the gallery wall to seemingly more traditional works of art that force the viewer to dig into narratives about identity, family, geo-political histories, and the inter-woven generational traumas and the courage one must muster to break free of the “weight” of such stories. It is also notable that this exhibit is being hosted during the 20th anniversary of the CAC’s building designed by another ground-breaking Islamic female artist, Zaha Hadid: imagine the conversations these two visionaries could have had...

We invite you to explore, create, immerse yourselves, and discover what stories, connections and lessons can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy!

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About the Artist: Baseera Khan

- Born in 1980 in Denton, Texas. Their parents were immigrants from Bangalore, India.
- BFA in drawing/painting and sociology from University of North Texas, Denton, TX (2005). In college, Khan started out studying computer science and graphic design before being encouraged by a professor to try drawing classes.
- MFA from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (2012).
- Notable solo exhibitions include *Free to Be*, Jenkins Johnson Projects, Brooklyn, New York (2019) and *Reading Room On Purpose*, NADA Projects, organized by Participant Inc, New Art Dealers Alliance, Miami, Florida (2017).
- Most recent group exhibitions included *Home Body*, Sapar Contemporary, New York, NY (2021), *Braidrage*, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA (2020)
- Their works are part of several public permanent collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim, Whitney Museum of American Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center, MN, and the New Orleans Museum of Art, LA.
- Recipient of the UOZO Art Prize (2020).



About Khan's work

- Baseera Khan works across media from painting, textiles, and photography to installation, performance, and sculpture.
- Through explorations of material—including their own body—Khan makes plain how notions of economy, labor, goods and services, and art itself often serve as rich sites for exploring our accumulated histories, experiences, and individual and collective traumas.
- Khan specifically situates her work in the post-9/11 political space, and the contradictions between privacy and surveillance in everyday life: "I started to make enough work to realize that the kinds of affliction I personally have felt being raised in a society that seems perfectly fine for me made my family uncomfortable in certain ways."
- Khan is interested in the concept of appropriation, and especially highlighting objects that have traditionally been treated and collected as artifacts by Western museums. When discussing the location of an early exhibit, Khan says "(I) felt uncomfortable with the fact that there were artworks and objects that are un-researched in the museum's collection. I feel uncomfortable around the fact that all these objects are sort of rendered obscure, not seen, not researched. And they're separate from the natives that maybe they belong to. This idea of stolen culture, stolen objects, is something I feel very uncomfortable about."



Quotes

"I am a New York-based multidisciplinary artist who sublimates colonial histories primarily through performance and sculpture...Using concealment and abstraction as aesthetic strategies, my process reveals xenophobic policies that influence our public/private spaces, as well as hypocrisies embedded within pop-cultural and media trends, education, and sports/leisure lifestyles... My practice might provide a lens for black, brown, and queer, Muslims. I hope my work also reaches other groups who remain unseen by imperialistic American histories and policies."
-Baseera Khan

"I collage distinct and often mutually exclusive cultural references to explore the conditions of alienation, displacement, assimilation, and fluidity...Using visual legacies of body identities, ritual, and spiritualities I also attempt to reveal volatile subjectivities especially within capitalist-driven social environments such as the United States."
-Baseera Khan

"I make work to discuss materials and their economies, the effects of this relationship to labor, to family structures, religion, or spirituality, to reveal the intersections of power and culture. This dichotomy holds history and I like to disrupt their inherited visual legacies through body performances, collage, and installation. Making layers in my work that fit besides, on top, in between, and underneath creates numerous projects that evoke senses of living under surveillance, finding desire, living between the mental state of exile and kinship. I generate installations of concealment, momentary reflections, and sanctuary. My life's work is dedicated to the development of my own legacy, on my own terms, with the use of fashion, photography, textiles and music, parody, sculpture and performance, I manifest my femme native-born Muslim American experience."
-Baseera Khan

"I've always been a sort of misbehaved person with materials, with religion, with whatever, you know? If there's a set of rules, I will definitely follow them, but if I feel like I need to do something outside of it, I'll try to figure out a way to do it, even if I'm not supposed to."
-Baseera Khan

About the Exhibition

Introductory Wall Text

Baseera Khan (b. 1980, Denton, Texas, lives and works in New York) shifts seamlessly between media to explore the interconnectedness of capital, politics, and the body. Their work creates spaces of reprieve, beauty, and safety, while also critiquing power structures and knowledge systems that systemically exclude or misrepresent marginalized populations. For their first solo exhibition in the Midwest, Khan brings together new and recent photographic collages, sculptures, and video, alongside a major new commission.

At the center of the exhibition are two monumental sculptures that expand upon the artist's interest in architectural signifiers of power. Khan juxtaposes kitsch and pop-culture imagery with traditional iconography on an immense arch, which is rendered using commonplace materials. It is inscribed with the artist's body, coupled with symbols from their practice, such as the standing microphone, crescent moon, and triangle. Adjacent to that, an abstracted column wrapped in Kashmiri rugs appears in a ruinous state, offering a meditation on failed utopias and fallen empires.

The accompanying works feature self-portraiture, personal archives, and domestic objects that delve into the ways in which daily life as a femme, Muslim person can be a radically political act. Khan's *Prayer Rugs* and *Seats* series suggest that worship may be an activity that happens outside the bounds of conventional religious settings as an extension of everyday life and an integral part of contemporary campaigns for social justice. In a parody of reality TV culture, *By Faith* features Khan engaging in personal and philosophical discussions that pertain to culture, history, love, and art. Finally, a selection of photo collages in custom frames explore the commodification of identity, privacy, and intimacy. Together, the works in *Weight on History* invite visitors to consider what it would mean to rewrite history from the perspective of the margins.

Vocabulary/Key words

Mosaik magazine

Kashmir

Imperialism

PATRIOT Act

Xenophobia

Islamophobia

Self-identification

Feminism

Embroidery

Archive

Themes

Identity: Many of Khan's works deal with their own identity as a femme, queer, Muslim.

Self-identification: The idea that every person has a right to self-identify regardless of governmental, religious, or social restrictions or expectations.

Colonial histories: Khan points to the discrepancies in knowledge between Greek/Roman and Islamic histories.

Symbolism: Khan relies on many symbols in the work—some personal and some are ubiquitous to many cultures.

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, “Why not starting something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I’ll help you.”

By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollack and Rita Rentschler raised \$5000 (about \$93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their “office” consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NY Times called the structure, “the best new building since the Cold War.”

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to “open their minds” to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC's 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid's first American building, and is the first American museum building designed by a woman. Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC's former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint, and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.

Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis. Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine's "100 Most Powerful Women," and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World," and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.

RULES AND GUIDELINES

- Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
- We require that must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.
- No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
- Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
- Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
- Walk throughout all galleries- no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

Accessibility information

- Our facility is ADA compliant and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
- Hearing protection is available upon request.
- Fidgets are available upon request.
- Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
- Large text is available upon request.
- Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Contemplation Room.
- For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at sturner@cincycac.org

PRE- AND POST-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

These discussions can occur prior to, during and after viewing.

- What do the patterns in Khan's work remind you of - specifically the sculptural and textile pieces? Where have you seen them before?
- Is a museum a place where you expect to find colorful lights and an artwork that looks like a disco ball? What do you think Khan is trying to do by making these artworks?
- Define the following phrase: the personal is the political. How does the artists play with this idea in their artwork?
- Consider the name for Baseera Khan's exhibition—*Weight on History*. As you view the works on display, what feelings and ideas do you think Khan is trying to convey?
- Khan contrasts a column inspired by classical Greek and Roman architecture (upon which many Western neoclassical buildings are based and a symbol of knowledge and power) with an arch evocative of Islamic architecture. Which one is shown in a broken, fragmented state? Why do you think that is the case?

LESSON PLAN IDEAS

- Islamic art is influenced by Arabic, Persian, Mesopotamian, and African traditions, in addition to Byzantine inspirations. Yet Islamic art is unique in its own way. Geometric art in the ceramic tiles is extremely sophisticated, requiring scientific and mathematical precision, with imagination and creativity. Abstract geometrical forms were favored in mosques, based on mathematical shapes and forms, because they encourage spiritual contemplation.
 - Take a visual tour of the Pattern in Islamic Art (PiLA) online gallery: <https://patterninislamicart.com/>
 - For younger students, print and color Islamic tile coloring sheets found [here](#) or have them use a [template](#) to design their own tile.
 - For older students, hand-cut a rubber stamp and create a visual piece of art that features repeating symmetrical patterns.
- Textiles and traditional Islamic patterns play a central role in the artist's work. Challenge students to try their hand at one of the following projects incorporating these concepts:
 - Create a Positive Affirmation Banner inspired by Khan's *Psychedelic Prayer Rug* series.
 - Using the structure of the arch, construct and decorate a piece that represents the student's identity.
- Discussing pieces such as the chandelier and the light-up seat, Khan says she likes to "disrupt" the traditionally white and sterile environments of museum galleries with colors, lights, and sounds that people wouldn't expect to see. If you could design an "unexpected" museum space, what would it look like? Working in groups, have students create a diorama of a museum. Challenge students to name their museum, pick a theme or subject, and create a handful of rooms that would represent the space to visitors.
- Several of the pieces in this show have also been on view in another exhibit titled *I am an Archive*. Beginning with a discussion to define the term archive, have students plan and build a personal archive or time capsule. Have students include a hand-written letter that they would want their future self, a year from now read.

ARTWORK & WALL TEXT

Art and Labels

Painful Arc (Shoulder-High), 2022

Plywood, high-density urethane foam, and LED lights

Commissioned by the Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Painful Arc (Shoulder-High) expands upon the artist's interest in interrogating architectural archetypes and the authority they represent. While found in areas around the world, early Islamic architects mastered the design and use of arches, imbuing them with symbolic significance. Islamic arches act as gateways to religious, memorial, and communal spaces. Using commonplace materials, including plywood and high-density foam, Khan renders a traditional arch clad with panels incised with patterns sourced from illustrated Islamic manuscripts and self-portraiture. On the upper half of the structure, two silhouettes of the artist's body mirror each other, as if climbing the façade of the arch. Recurrent symbols from the artist's practice such as the triangle, the crescent moon, and the microphone suggest a sense of weightlessness, freeing the work from a predetermined history and inscribing it with the artist's own experience. The work raises questions about which histories, ideas, and individuals are memorialized and valued, and which are forgotten or erased.



- Islamic architects made arches common motif in architecture, not just for structure
- First arches in the Middle East, not Rome
- Mimics the idea of a Roman triumphal arch—instead of a Roman ruler, symbols about the artist

Second Skin, Columns 1, 2, 4, 5, 2022

Plywood, polyester, and custom silk rugs handmade in Kashmir
Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Second Skin is a sculptural installation consisting of a monumental column in four parts. Inspired by classical Greek architecture, the structural pillar is a common feature of classical and neoclassical architecture, often found on governmental, educational, financial and cultural buildings as a symbol of Western knowledge and power. Depicted here in a fragmented state, the structure is a meditation on failed utopias and fallen empires. The upholstered “skin” features ornate silk rugs woven by Kashmiri artisans – a reference to the border dispute between India and Pakistan over the contested region of Kashmir. *Second Skin* offers a prescient commentary on the radical acts of reimagination necessary to refashion our institutions as more representative, equitable, and inclusive.



- Based on Greek ruins of drums from columns lying on the ground
- Column fragments are hollow and covered with Kashmiri rugs—many Greek motifs were inspired by Middle Eastern designs (Ionia, Persia)
- Consider the emulation of the Greeks and Romans by the United States and France—continued act of colonization and appropriation (e.g., England and Netherlands making “Kashmiri rugs”)
- Compare column fragments to the arch—what do you think the message is?

Lunar Countdown, Purple Heart, ACT UP, I AM A BODY, iammuslima, I'M AS GOOD AS YOU ARE, from the *Psychedelic Prayer Rugs* series, 2017

Wool rugs, custom-designed by the artist and handmade in Kashmir

Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

The Psychedelic Prayer Rugs series applies the format of Islamic devotional mats to colorful compositions, combining text and image. Each work contains symbolic visual elements common to traditional prayer rugs such as the five-pointed star, crescent moon, and mihrab. The mihrab is an arch-shaped niche in the wall facing Mecca, and is used to orient believers during prayer. These symbols are juxtaposed with contemporary pop-culture iconography such as a Nike sneaker, microphone stand, and pink triangle, which references protest posters and the struggle for equality by LGBTQIA+ communities. Expanding on the idea of non-action as a form of both political rebellion and prayer, Khan includes an Urdu poem that reads “The right to speak can be taken away, but not the right to stay silent.” Together, these works



suggest that worship may be an activity that happens outside the bounds of conventional religious settings, as an extension of everyday life and an integral part of contemporary campaigns for social justice.

- “The right to speak can be taken away, but not the right to stay silent.” -phrase in Urdu
- “Personal” prayer rugs—personal symbols
- Actions of everyday life impact others/are an act of protest

Yakshi and Red Shoes, from the *Law of Antiquities* series, 2022
Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Mosque Lamp and Prayer Carpet Green, from the *Law of Antiquities* series, 2021
Courtesy of Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins
Archival inkjet print and artist’s custom frame

For a recent solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, Khan researched the institution’s Islamic art collection, with a focus on tools, rugs, and garments created for religious or scientific purposes. The resulting body-scaled prints feature the artist performing basic gestures with these objects, or if the originals were too fragile, with reproductions. By inserting their body and hands between the things themselves and the hands of a conservator, Khan engages in an act of reclaiming these histories, while highlighting how the same care afforded to objects is not consistently applied to individuals and communities. *Law of Antiquities* recalls the unseemly ways in which many Islamic objects have entered museum collections through colonialism, imperialism, and cultural appropriation, and their subsequent framing as ornamental or decorative, rather than as sophisticated tools that have played a fundamental role in the development of the arts and sciences in Western cultures.



- Way of reclaiming objects in an institution that no longer have reference to their original use
- Yakshi is a female nature spirit originally in Hindu, but spread to Buddhism and Jainism—remnant of feminine deity worship pre-Indo European invasion
- Lamp and prayer rug used in mosque during prayer for Muslims
- Laws of Antiquities were written throughout the mid-late 20th century “protecting” archeological sites and cultural objects

Going Abroad, 2019

Two way mirror film, acrylic, and archival inkjet prints

Orientalism, 2019

Two way mirror film, acrylic, and archival inkjet prints

Acoustic Sound, 2019

Two way mirror film, acrylic, and archival inkjet prints

Bedroom Window, 2019

Two way mirror film, acrylic, and archival inkjet prints

Humankind, 2018

Chromogenic print, acrylic, and pleather

Green Shapes White Triangle, 2020

Chromogenic print, metal chain, acrylic, and wool rug hand-made in Kashmir

Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

These collages include clippings from encyclopedias, archival material, pieces of rugs, Ziploc bags, and photographs of Khan's body and jewelry. Each frame is overlaid with cut-out acrylic in geometric forms, irregular patterns, or the architectural profile of the mihrab, an Islamic architectural element signaling the direction of Mecca. These multilayered arrangements suggest an intimate accumulation of personal objects significant to the artist, intertwined with historical events. One example features a page from the book *The End of Imagination* by author and activist Arundhati Roy which details Narendra Modi's notorious mishandling of the 2002 Gujarat riots in which the city's Muslim population was brutally targeted. While the display of distinct materials functions as an editorial strategy in which content is revealed or concealed by its careful positioning, together these compositions present a non-linear narrative mirroring the fragmented nature of history.



- Intentionally created so that the viewer sees themselves in the work—connection with history and the artist

Rug Factory, 2020

Chromogenic print, acrylic, and wool rug hand-made in Kashmir
Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Central to the collage *Rug Factory* is a double-spread of the magazine *Mosaik*, a comic book originally made and distributed in former East Germany. Begun in 1955, the publication was, at times, mildly subversive against the state, but also printed racist and anti-Semitic stereotypes and caricatures. As noted on the Post-it note that is part of the work, this particular page depicts the visit of a king to a rug factory. At the top is a black and white image of ancient ruins, recalling the shape of the scalloped columns on view nearby. At the bottom of the composition is a section of the signature Kashmiri rug that the artist includes as a recurrent motif throughout their practice. Interested in the history of textiles, Khan references the long tradition of colonialist exploitation through cultural appropriation, including fashion and design, that continues in today's consumer society.



- References appropriation of culture through colonialism, commodification

Acoustic Sound Blankets, 2017-20

Cotton insulation, cotton-silk blend fabric, and silk-rayon blend thread
Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Sculptural garments made of thick, black, sound-absorbing material, *Acoustic Sound Blankets* formally recall oversized orthodox Muslim women's clothing and feature circular apertures embroidered with golden motifs. Similar to the work hanging above, *Features [Feat.]* (2018), the elaborate patterns are inspired by a collection of heirlooms collected by generations of Khan's family. Conceived when the United States government imposed a series of travel bans on citizens from Muslim countries, these works have been worn by the artist in public protests against discrimination, as well as during performative interventions. In response to the history of xenophobia and Islamophobia that Western societies have often expressed towards Muslim cultures – sometimes resulting in acts of violence against women – these substantial forms create a safe space in which bodies can exist free from cultural judgment.



Through their imposing presence, *Acoustic Sound Blankets* raise questions about who is allowed to fit into societal constructs and, conversely, who is excluded.

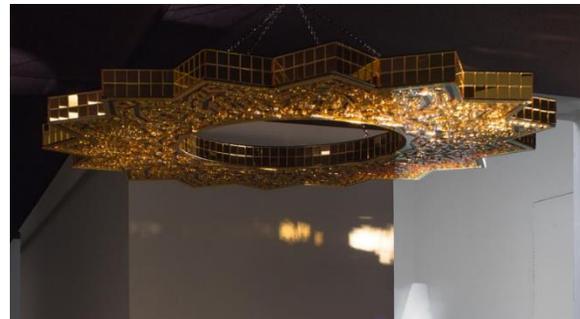
- Used in performances—Khan wears on the body
- Can make associations with modesty laws—wearing of hijab and burqa (chadaree); however, it is not necessarily against these garments. More against the forced use of them
- Motifs are taken from

textiles collected by the women in Khan’s family. Her mother was a seamstress (consider also the history of textiles being “women’s work”)

Features [Feat.], 2018

Acrylic, insulation foam, wood, and disco ball motor
 Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

Lit from multiple perspectives, the 16-point chandelier, *Features [Feat.]* is made to resemble a disco ball that, by refracting the light, creates mesmerizing patterns on the adjacent walls. Its shape and the tessellated, mirrored black and gold motifs are inspired by textile heirlooms that female members of Khan’s family have collected and passed down through the generations. Khan has vivid memories of their mother – a skillful seamstress who emigrated from India to Texas with Khan’s family – making traditional clothing for family and community members for milestone occasions, which sparked the artist’s interest in textiles and fashion.



- Motifs from textiles collected by Khan’s family
- Creates an atmosphere that is different than traditional gallery—more akin to a club (*Love Ceremony*)

By Faith, 2020

Color videos, with sound
 15 min.

Originally commissioned by The Kitchen, New York. Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

A multi-part video work parodying reality TV culture, *By Faith* features Khan in conversation with a group of people in an environment that resembles the artist's Brooklyn apartment. These unscripted discussions cover a wide range of topics, including identity, history, love, and art. The set is comprised of theater backdrops created from photos of Khan's kitchen, dining room, bedroom, and front door, creating a personal setting for the freeform dialogues. Painter Amy Sillman and Khan share deeply personal anecdotes related to childhood and family, with a focus on cultural differences and the role of Islam. Professional actor Brandon Burton and Khan engage in a friendly quarrel that circles around questions of Blackness, representation, and decolonizing Eurocentric art histories. Between conversational sections, works by Khan, such as the rotating mirrored chandelier, *Features [Feat.]* (2018) and the plexiglass bookshelf *Reading Room, on Purpose* (2017), emphasize the self-reflective nature of Khan's practice.



Love Ceremony, 2022

Pleather, polyester, trim, cotton, wood, acrylic, and neon lights

Commissioned by Artspace, New Haven. Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

As a part of Khan's *Seats* series, this two-part bench extends the artist's interest in creating spaces of rest and reprieve in contrast to the perceived seriousness of the "white cube" gallery. A colorful patchwork of fabrics sourced from the artist's personal collection creates an abstracted pattern that extends across two plush, padded cushions. The curvilinear cotton and pleather shapes are applied in haphazard strips with recognizable elements that reference unconventional community spaces, including the fashion brand Opening Ceremony's tote bags. The wooden supports of the seat feature a curved plywood structure, framing illuminated panels of changing neon colors. By bringing together soft feminine elements that reference middle-class Muslim households, fashion, and the color and energy of social spaces, such as a bar or karaoke club, Khan seeks to subvert the clean, white, hard-edged geometries of traditional art galleries and museums. The work's bold colors, organic forms, and soft textures reveal a more inviting way of experiencing art.

- Can be sat on
- Against typical feel of a gallery; Khan believes galleries and museums should be fun and inviting

RESOURCES

Artist's Website: <https://baseerakhan.com>

Social Media: <https://www.instagram.com/baseerakhan/?hl=en>

Read

Art in Conversation: Baseera Khan via The Brooklyn Rail:

<https://brooklynrail.org/2022/02/art/Baseera-Khan-with-Lee-Ann-Norman>

Art, Yoga, & a Culture of Appropriation via Aligned:

<https://www.alignedmag.com/articles/art-yoga-a-culture-of-appropriation/>

Baseera Khan Uses Their Body as a Weapon via Frieze:

<https://www.frieze.com/article/baseera-khan-archive-2022-review>

Baseera Khan's Vivid, Anti-Imperialist Odes via Hyperallergic:

<https://hyperallergic.com/531376/baseera-khans-vivid-anti-imperialist-odes/>

Climbing Generations Of Trauma And Muslim Heritage via Art F City:

<http://artfcity.com/2017/03/28/climbing-generations-of-trauma-and-muslim-heritage-baseera-khans-iamuslima-at-participant-inc/>

The Artist Creating a 'Karaoke Spiritual Center' to Explore South Asian Identity via Vice:

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/9knj87/the-artist-creating-a-karaoke-spiritual-center-to-express-her-queer-muslim-identity>

See How Artist Baseera Khan Makes Her Bright and Cozy Brooklyn Apartment Double as an

Art Studio via ArtNet: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/baseera-khan-studio-visit-2134591>

Watch

Baseera Khan: Weight on History via Moody Center for the Arts on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jbjGxgjhfgv>

Listen

Conversation: Baseera Khan and Amani Al-Khatahtbeh via The Guggenheim:

<https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/conversation-baseera-khan-and-amani-al-khatahtbeh>

The Modern Art Notes Podcast, No. 486: Baseera Khan, FutureFarmers:

<https://manpodcast.com/portfolio/no-486-baseera-khan-futurefarmers/>

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Ohio Common Core Links

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards>

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards>

Kentucky Common Core Links

<https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx>

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf

Indiana Standards Links

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards>

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts>

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change

<http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives>