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Blaffer Art Museum Monira Al Qadiri: Refined Vision

On view September 23, 2022—January 8, 2023

HOUSTON, TX | September 22 , 2022 ---

The Blaffer Art Museum, in partnership with the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston, is proud to present the first solo museum exhibition in the United States of the work of Berlin-based artist Monira Al Qadiri.

Considered one of the most important artists to emerge from the Persian Gulf region in recent years, Al Qadiri came of age during the rapid transformation of her childhood nation of Kuwait—from its status as one of the world’s oldest civilizations, through its dominance of the oil industry, to its current role as a battleground in geopolitics. Al Qadiri’s work examines petroleum-centric cultures, or “petro-cultures,” where life and society are informed by the practices and discourses involving the consumption of, and subsequent dependence on, oil and gas. Her practice broadly serves as a seismograph for this way of life, examining the zeitgeist informed by competing ideas of prosperity, religion, and globalization. The exhibition’s title *Refined Vision* is a playful reflection on these subjects, recalibrating and refocusing perceptions of complex multinational social, economic, and political spheres.

The works in *Refined Vision* range from surreal to melancholic, reflecting the intense and often astonishing scenes that make up the artist’s real (and imagined) memories of her formative years in the Middle East. For this exhibition, Al Qadiri was originally inspired by parallels of wealth and infrastructure between the Texas Gulf Coast and the Persian Gulf region. As a result, she poignantly invokes images and tableaux that will be familiar to both locales, in the hopes that themes will resonate and overlap.

Furthermore, Al Qadiri infuses her projects with markers of both the ancient past and a projected future. She often intertwines complicated world histories and cultural issues with humorous technicolor elements of science fiction—via dinosaur remains, interplanetary exploration, or alien technologies. In this way, Al Qadiri urges us to evaluate our current conditions, conscientiously envisioning a planet that is more cognizant of its peoples, lands, and distinction of “resources.”

With major support from the Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston, this exhibition will debut four newly commissioned major artworks that span video, glass, kinetic sculpture, and interactive installations.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a monograph co-published in 2023 by Blaffer Art Museum and Inventory Press, Los Angeles, featuring text by curator, educator, and scholar Amin Alsaden and an interview with the artist conducted by exhibition curator Tyler Blackwell.

This exhibition is organized by Tyler Blackwell, Curator of Contemporary Art at Speed Art Museum and former Cynthia Woods Mitchell Associate Curator at Blaffer Art Museum. Major support for *Monira Al Qadiri: Refined Vision* and its catalogue is provided by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston. Additional support is provided by König Galerie, Berlin.

Monira Al Qadiri (b. 1983) is a Kuwaiti visual artist born in Senegal. In 2010, she received a PhD in intermedia art from Tokyo University of the Arts, where her research was focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle East—stemming from histories of poetry, music, art, and religious practices in the region. Al Qadiri's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2022); Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2020); Gasworks, London, UK (2017); Stroom Den Haag, the Hague, the Netherlands (2017); and the Kunstverein Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany (2019); among others. She has been featured in group exhibitions at venues that include the Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2020); MoMA PS1, New York, New York (2019); the Pinchuk Art Center, Kiev, Ukraine (2019); the 6th Athens Biennial (2018); the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial (2018); and the Jameel Arts Center, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (2018); among many others. Her films and videos have also been screened in Ireland, Germany, South Korea, Romania, Egypt, Qatar, Norway, and many more nations across the globe. In 2022, Al Qadiri was featured in the Venice Biennale's central exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*.

She is a 2022-2023 Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts Artist-in-Residence.

This project is supported in part by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts. The Blaffer Art Museum is funded in part by the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

Visitor Information

120 Fine Arts Building
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204

Museum Hours:
Tues-Fri, 10-5pm

Sat-Sun, 12-5pm

Admission is always free.

About Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

The University of Houston's Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts is a premier institution for education, scholarship, and innovation in the arts, where every day we are cultivating the next generation of creative professionals and unlocking the potential of the arts to impact society and change the world. Our students are forging new frontiers and advancing the arts through academic excellence, innovative programming, and—together with our world renown faculty—ascending to the highest level of contemporary professional practice. Houston is a first choice for the arts. Houston is a city of culture and diversity, a quintessential arts destination, and a gateway to the international arts community.

Steeped in the richness of diverse cultures, Houston and its engaging community network provide a citywide laboratory for research, education, and practice in the performing and visual arts.