



Omar el Nagdi (Egyptian), Untitled, 1970, Mixed media on wood, 47 x 47 in. Collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE

## **Block Museum announces exhibitions for year of global modernisms**

**2019 - 2020 season includes art from Latin America, Southeast Asia and Middle East**

EVANSTON, ILL. --- The Block Museum of Art announces its exhibition schedule for 2019 – 2020. Four major shows, highlighting the diversity of global modernisms, will present a mid-20th century view of art as it is entwined with culture and politics around the globe.

“Each of these exhibitions contributes to the recalibration of modernism’s presentation in the art museum,” said Kathleen Bickford Berzock, associate director of curatorial affairs at The Block. “The shows invite us to look at modernity, and the response of artists to its pressures and innovations, from different vantage points and to understand that there are many modernisms, rather than a single European-dominated movement.”

The season aligns with the museum's commitment to present art across time, cultures and media.

“The exhibitions encourage an important conversation about the global nature of modernism,” said Lisa Corrin, The Block's Ellen Philips Katz Director. “These artworks exemplify a spirit of visual and political revolution that crossed beyond national borders and inspired a generation of artists. This is a crucial moment to revisit these histories and explore the fundamental connections between them.”

The exhibition schedule is as follows:

## **“Pop América, 1965 – 1975”** **Sept. 8 to Dec. 8, 2019**

“Pop América, 1965 – 1975” is the first exhibition to unify Latin American expressions of Pop and explore how its bold and colorful imagery, references to mass culture and representations of everyday objects, signs and symbols were embraced by artists working across the Western hemisphere. The exhibition makes a timely and critical contribution to understanding impulses behind Pop Art from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s.

The exhibition reshapes debates over Pop's perceived political neutrality and aesthetic innovations and expands ideas of Pop beyond the U.S. and Britain. “Pop América” features nearly 100 artworks by artists working in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and the United

States. The artists in the exhibition, including Antonio Dias, Rubens Gerchman, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Cildo Mereiles, Anna Maria Maiolino, Marta Minujín, Hugo Rivera-Scott and Andy Warhol, create vital dialogues that cross national borders. United by their use of Pop's visual strategies, these artists have made bold contributions to conceptualism, performance and new-media art, as well as social protest, justice movements and debates about freedom.



Hugo Rivera-Scott, *Pop América*, 1968. Collage on cardboard, 30 x 21.5 inches (76.5 x 54.5 cm). Courtesy of the artist. © Hugo Rivera-Scott. Photo by Jorge Brantmayer.

“Pop América, 1965 – 1975” was co-organized by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas. The exhibition is guest curated by Esther Gabara, E. Blake Byrne Associate Professor of Romance Studies and Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University.

For The Block Museum, the exhibition is curated by Corinne Granof, curator of academic programs, and Evelyn Kreutzer, interdisciplinary graduate fellow. The exhibition was on view at the McNay Art Museum Oct. 4, 2018 – Jan. 12, 2019 and is currently at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University through July 21, 2019. The Block Museum is the final venue for the exhibition. The Block's presentation of the exhibition is supported in part by the Alumnae of Northwestern University.

“Pop América, 1965 – 1975” was the recipient of the inaugural Sotheby's Prize. The Sotheby's Prize is an annual award to support and encourage museums to break new ground. The grant aims to recognize curatorial excellence, and to facilitate exhibitions that explore overlooked or underrepresented areas of art history. “Pop América, 1965 – 1975” was made possible by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

# “Modernisms: Iranian, Turkish and Indian Highlights from NYU’s Abby Grey Collection”

Jan. 21, 2019 to April 5, 2020

“Modernisms: Iranian, Turkish and Indian Highlights from NYU’s Abby Grey Collection” surveys art from three nations where unique and vibrant forms of modernism sprang forth in the 1960s and 70s. Challenging histories of artistic modernism that too often begin and end in the West, “Modernisms” explores an under-recognized flowering of innovation and risk-taking in art beyond Europe and North America.

Influenced by local traditions, cultural exchange and the sights and sounds of modern life, artists in Iran, Turkey and India forged distinctive new modes of expression. From Iranian and Turkish artists who explored calligraphy and ornamentation through avant-garde abstraction, to Indian painters whose expressive canvases drew upon Hindu iconography, the 114 works in “Modernisms” reflect the lively dialogue between East and West, past and present. Folk dances and weavings inspired Turkish painters Mustafa Esirkuş and Adnan Turani, while Iranian artist Faramarz Pilaram freely translated Islamic architecture into glittering geometric forms. These works testify to both the continuity of culture and the disruption of modernity.

Organized by New York University’s Grey Art Gallery, “Modernisms” draws from the collection of curator and patron Abby Weed Grey. Grey traveled widely in Asia and the Middle East, searching for art that brought the visual language of modernity into dialogue with non-Western heritages. With a robust collection of some 700 paintings, sculptures and works on paper, she founded the Grey Art Gallery in 1975, stimulating learning through cross-cultural exchange. Through her collection, this exhibition tells a story of “multiple modernities,” reflecting the diversity of formal and cultural responses to the changing world of the 1960s and 70s.

The exhibition will be on view at Grey Art Gallery at NYU from Sept. 10 to Dec. 7 before coming to The Block. The exhibition is curated for The Block by Kathleen Bickford Berzock, associate director of curatorial affairs, and Michael Metzger, Pick-Laudati Curator of Media Arts.

“Modernisms: Iranian, Turkish and Indian Highlights from NYU’s Abby Grey Collection” is organized by the Grey Art Gallery at New York University, and is made possible in part by the generous support of Dalinc and Mehves Ariburnu, WLS Spencer Foundation, A. Alfred Taubman Foundation, Avid Modjtabai, Violet Jabara Charitable Trust, Charina Endowment Fund, Alaleh and Ariel Ostad, the Grey’s Director’s Circle, Inter/National Council and Friends and the Abby Weed Grey Trust. In-kind support is provided by ArtCareNYC, Inc.



Faramarz Pilaram, *Mosques of Isfahan (B)*, c. 1962, Ink, watercolor, and gold and silver paint on paper, 45 3/4 x 34 3/4 in. (116.2 x 88.3 cm). Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection. Gift of Abby Weed Grey, G1975.110

## **“Terence Gower: Ciudad Moderna”**

**Opens Jan. 21, 2020**

Working in video, sculpture, drawing and photography, New York-based artist Terence Gower (b. British Columbia, 1965) investigates the material and intellectual histories of postwar positivism in art and architecture. The contemporary built environments of 1960s Mexico are the focus of his 2004 video, *Ciudad Moderna*. A kinetic, six-minute montage of clips drawn from the 1966 Mexican comedy film “*Despedida de Casada*,” *Ciudad Moderna* wittily transforms its source material to examine the film’s modernist architectural backdrop.

Throughout much of the 20th century, Mexico City was fertile ground for progressive architects and urban planners seeking development and social reform through design. Using freeze frames, projection drawings and clever digital composites, Gower analyzes some of the most celebrated monuments of this utopian moment in Latin American history, from Mexico City’s famed Museum of Anthropology to the Hotel Presidente in Acapulco. Pop culture and high modernism collide as Gower shifts from depersonalized interiors to swinging musical numbers, presenting architecture as a visual abstraction as well as a space of lived experience.

A limited-edition work, *Ciudad Moderna* is part of a gift of 68 works of contemporary art donated to the Block Museum in 2016 by art collector, philanthropist and software innovator Peter Norton. The Block gift is one of a series Norton has made to university art museums throughout the country. The gifts recognize and support institutions integrating art into teaching and learning across disciplines, fostering creative museum practices and engaging audiences with diverse forms of contemporary art.

The exhibition is curated by Michael Metzger, Pick-Laudati Curator of Media Arts.

## **“Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s – 1980s”**

**April 28 to July 26, 2020**

From the 1950s through the 1980s, painters and sculptors throughout the Arab world explored the challenges and possibilities of abstraction in art. “*Taking Shape*”, an exhibition of works from the collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), presents the work of Middle Eastern and North African artists whose creative visions stretched beyond the boundaries of representation. Including artists originating from or working in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and the UAE, this exhibition, organized by the Grey Art Gallery at NYU, reveals the global reach and regional importance of abstraction in the 20th century.

Ranging from the hard-edged to the dreamlike, the nearly 80 works in “*Taking Shape*” reveal a variety of formal approaches and cultural sources. Compositions by Omar El Nagdi of Egypt and Hussein Madi of Lebanon take inspiration from Arabic calligraphic forms, while human and animal contours emerge from the canvases of Iraqi painter Dia Azzawi and Kuwaiti mixed-media artist Munira al-Kazi. Elsewhere, the exhibition explores intricate geometries of color and line, as in the silkscreens of Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata. From earthly to celestial, fluid to precise, the works in “*Taking Shape*” suggest the inexhaustible richness of non-objective approaches to painting, sculpture and printmaking.



Mohamed Melehi (Moroccan), *Composition*, 1970, Acrylic on panel, 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in. Collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE

Though abstract, these diverse works reflect the larger cultural, intellectual and spiritual negotiations of the Arab world in the 20th century. “Taking Shape” illuminates these broad horizons, introducing visitors to the diverse schools and movements that developed within and across these nations in a time of heightened international dialogue and diaspora.

The exhibition will be on view at Grey Art Gallery at NYU from Jan. 14 to April 4, 2020 before coming to The Block. The exhibition is curated for The Block by Kathleen Bickford Berzock, associate director of curatorial affairs and Michael Metzger, Pick-Laudati Curator of Media Arts.

“Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s–1980s” is organized by the Grey Art Gallery at NYU and curated by Suheyly Takesh and Lynn Gumpert. Major support for the exhibition is provided by the Barjeel Art Foundation. Additional generous support is provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, the Violet Jabara Charitable Trust, the Grey’s Director’s Circle, Inter/National Council and Friends, and the Abby Weed Grey Trust.

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