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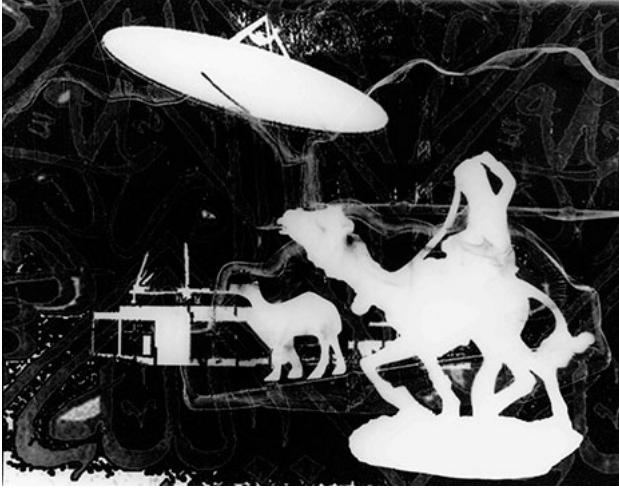
The modern art of Hajj



Ahmad Mater, Magnetism, 2011

The Road to Mecca by Maha Malluh (2010)

The response of artists today to the experience or the idea of Hajj is manifested in great many ways through photography and other media. Here, several artists are highlighted whose work encapsulates different perspectives on Hajj in powerful and striking forms.

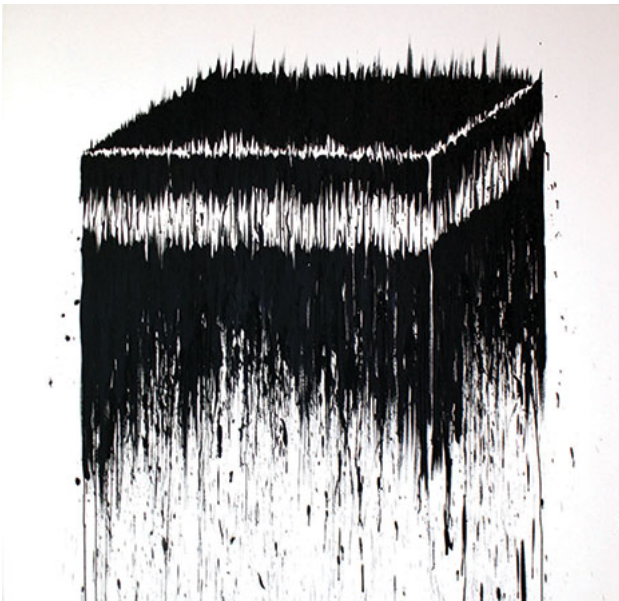


British Museum 2011,6030.1

This work by the contemporary Saudi Arabian artist Maha Malluh draws on the contrasting experiences of travelling on Hajj in the past and present. Malluh uses the design of the textile (*kiswa*) that covers the Ka'ba as a background.

The artist writes about this work: "modern man no longer enjoys the freedom of traversing expansive desert dunes, relatively unobstructed". Malluh uses her child toys as a basis for the photogram. She draws inspiration for her work from her home country, which she describes as "a land of contrasting images and ideas".

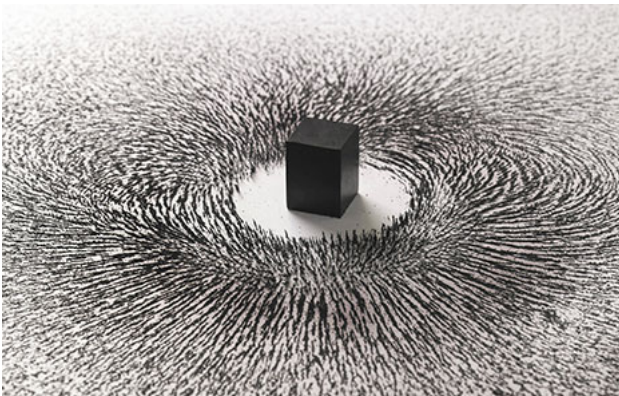
Black Cube II By Kader Attia (2005)



Oil on Canvas. Kader Attia and Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin.

This is one of a series of paintings inspired by the form of the Ka'ba. For the artist, Ka'ba is what links man and God as the centre of all things, drawing Muslims everywhere to want to touch it. Kader Attia was born in 1970 into an Algerian family in Paris.

Magnetism By Ahmed Mater al-Ziad (2012)



British Museum 2012,6018.2

When my grandfathers spoke to me as a child about their experience of Hajj, they spoke of the physical attraction they felt towards the Ka'ba, that they felt drawn to it by an almost magnetic pull.

In the installation Mater has evoked that feeling by using tens of thousands of iron filings placed within the magnetic fields of two magnets, only the upper one of which is visible. For Mater, Magnetism also conveys one of the essential elements of Hajj, that all Muslims are considered the same in the eyes of God whether rich, poor, young or old. As such the iron filings represent a unified body of pilgrims all of whom are similarly attracted to the Ka'ba as the centre of their world. The four etchings are based on photographs taken during experiments in installing Magnetism in the artist's studio in Saudi Arabia.

Ahmad Mater was born in 1979 in Tabuk, north-west Saudi Arabia. He was trained as a doctor and studied art at the Meftaha Arts Village.



Ahmad Mater installing Magnetism.

Seven Times by Idris Khan (2010)



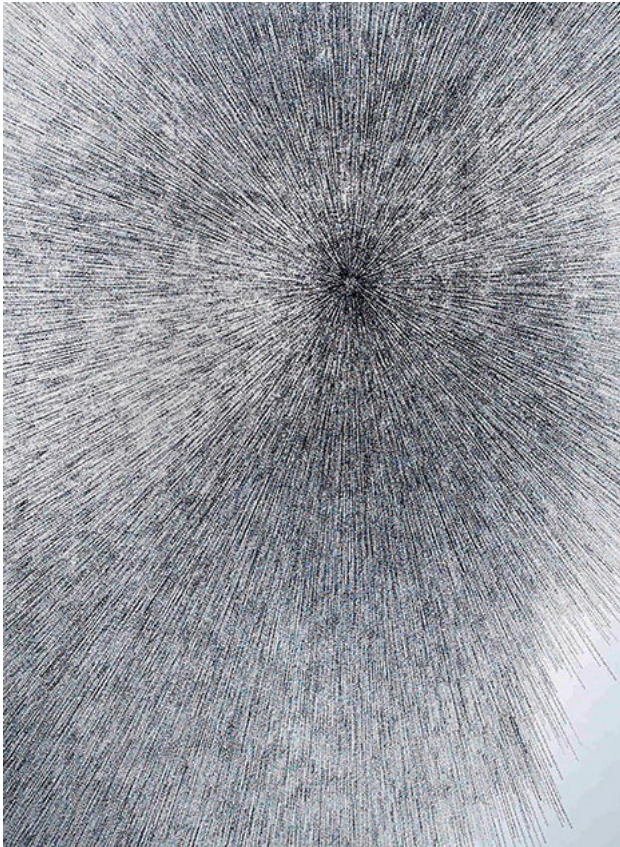
Seven Times is an installation of 144 sandblasted steel cubes with layered Arabic inscriptions. Idris Khan is deliberately echoing Carl Andre's 144 Graphite silence. Repetition is what fascinates him, particularly the 'formal aesthetic power of stylized ritual. The version displayed in the Great Court during the course of Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam was adapted from the original and consisted of 49 cubes.

If you have ever watched footage of people walking round the Ka'ba seven times a stopping, it's a truly beautiful thing. I wanted to capture that.
Born in Birmingham in 1978, Idris Khan received his MFA from the Royal College of Art in 2004 and lives and works in London.



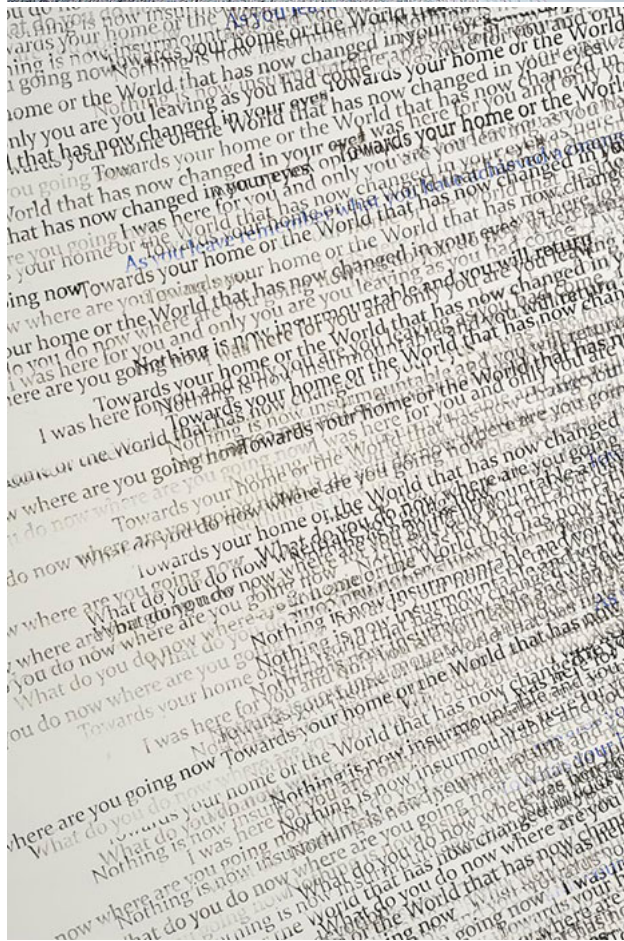
Seven Times installed in the Great Court. Idris Khan 2012

You and Only You by Idris Khan (2012)



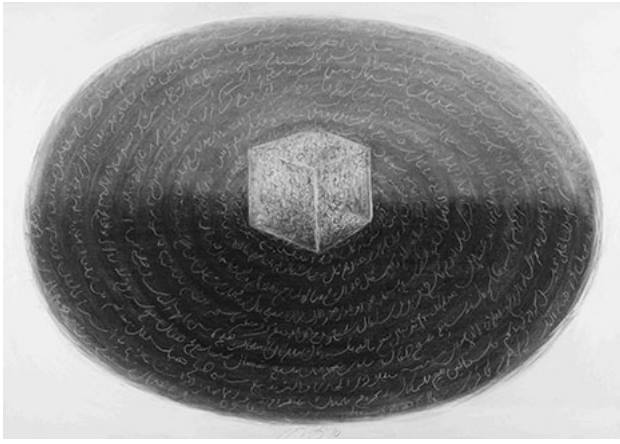
I was here for You and only You
 Are you leaving as you had come?
 Nothing is insurmountable and you will return
 What do you do now?
 Where are you going now?
 Towards home?
 Towards the World?
 The journey you have taken has shown your devotion
 As you leave remember what you have achieved
 a oneness with this earth and another

This work was created on site especially for the exhibition. It is made up of a series of texts, hand stamped directly onto the wall, some of which are listed here. These texts are fragments of responses by pilgrims to the experience of performing Hajj. The shape of the work evokes the site of the sanctuary at Mecca with the Ka'ba at its heart. Each word represents the footstep of a pilgrim and captures the flow of energy that the powerful movement of the mass of people performing "tawaf" conveys.



Wall drawing no. 2. Oil paint, gesso and marble dust. Idris Khan

White Cube by Walid Siti (2010)



Acrylic and crayon on paper. British Museum 2011,6014.1

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The white cube is depicted as a transparent open space, around which are concentric circles of text. These are forms of letters not intended to be read. Walid Siti was born in Dohuk, Iraqi Kurdistan, in 1954. He is a graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad and the Academy of Fine Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia. He lives and works in London.