

Cradle

According to Collins Thesaurus, the word 'cradle' can have four meanings. Used as a noun, it can refer to a bassinet or crib or a birthplace, place of origin or source. As a verb cradle can mean to hold, nestle or nurse or to nourish, nurture or watch over.

Canada is a very young nation on the world stage, built through colonization and through immigration from all parts of the world. Due to global perceptions of Canada as a favourable place for political, social and economic reasons to settle, more than 250 ethnic groups were identified in the Canadian census of 2016 as compared to only 25 at the beginning of the 20th century. In a sense the nation of Canada could thus be described as a cradle, striving to hold and nurture the multitude of ethnicities which now call this country home.

While Canada is a young country, many who settle here come from regions which lay claim to being sites of the oldest civilizations on earth: regions known as 'cradles of civilization' which, throughout their long and tumultuous histories, provided many of the building blocks upon which contemporary societies rest. A cradle of civilization has been defined as any location on earth where civilization is said to have independently emerged with a civilization being characterized by such criteria as the use of writing, cities, a class-based society, agriculture, animal domestication, monumental architecture and metallurgy. Current scholarship generally identifies six sites where civilization emerged independently. These are the Fertile Crescent (the Tigris-Euphrates Valley - present day Iran, Iraq and parts of Syria); ancient Egypt; the Indus River region (present day India and Pakistan); the North China Plain; the Andean Coast (present day Peru); and the Mesoamerican Gulf Coast (present day Mexico).

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition **Cradle** presents the work of three artists, currently residing in Edmonton, who originally come from regions associated with some of the cradles of civilization mentioned above. Arriving in Canada as economic immigrants or refugees from war and conflict, each of these artists is a story teller, sharing in their artworks ancient and rich cultural histories and legacies. While concerned with specific places and people in their works, however, these artists also strive to address more universal concerns to demonstrate that, regardless of where people come from, we are all one people with similar dreams and desires.

This exhibition features works by Hanny Al Khoury, originally from Palestine; Riaz Mehmood, originally from Pakistan; and Aboud Salman, originally from Syria and was organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition program.

Front Cover Image:

Riaz Mehmood
The conference of the birds, 2022
Screen print
Collection of the artist



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present this travelling exhibition to venues throughout Alberta. Currently the Art Gallery of Alberta serves over 60 venues in approximately 35 communities. Exhibitions on tour from the Art Gallery of Alberta easily adapt to space requirements of smaller venues: schools, libraries, museums, health care centres and other community facilities. The exhibitions are organized in such a manner as to make unpacking, packing, hanging and shipping as easy as possible. Along with the exhibition, each venue receives an Educational Interpretive Guide. These materials enable teachers to use the exhibition within the school curriculum.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Collection is the primary source of works featured in the travelling exhibitions. Other sources for exhibitions may include community partners, archives, private collections and loans from artists. Each year we welcome new venues to enrich their community art through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program.

Our Thanks

The artists

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts

and to the many individuals, organizations and communities who contribute to the success of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program each year.

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Cradle

Alberta





Hanny Al Khoury
Pal 5, 2022
Oil on paper
Collection of the artist

Hanny Al Khoury was born in 1990 and grew up in Eilabun, a Palestinian village near Tiberias in northern Israel. Eilabun was the only Palestinian village whose people, due to their Christian faith, were allowed to return to after the Nakba of 1948.

Al Khoury became interested in art as a young boy. He relates that as a child he couldn't focus on anything or relate to the world. His mother sent him to therapy and the therapist asked him to draw something for him. Al Khoury did the drawing and discovered his passion and the key for him to relate to the world.

Al Khoury finished high school in 2006 and began studying visual art in Tel Aviv. After a year, however, he fell out with his professors. Dropping out of college, he continued his art education for a further three years in a private studio. During this time he concentrated on oil painting in a hyper-realistic style.

As related by Al Khoury, living in Palestine/Israel was very difficult as he faced discrimination on many fronts. First, he was Palestinian in the larger state of Israel. This sense of being 'the other' was compounded by being a minority Christian Palestinian amongst the majority Muslim practicing Palestinians. On a personal level, his sense of identity and values also clashed with the conservative values of his immediate family. Finally, when speaking about art, Al Khoury states that he couldn't make it as an artist in Israel due to his identity.

In 2016 Al Khoury moved to Canada and became a permanent resident in 2017. With this move his art style and his whole life changed. As he expresses:

In Palestine I was capturing the outside/what I saw around me which didn't allow me to explore what was inside me. In Canada no one stops you from exploring. You are a free artist, able to paint whatever you want and however you want. In Canada I began to explore what was inside and my style changed. Being in this 'safe' land, I started dealing with everything I've gone through in my life and my work is a healing journey.



Riaz Mehmood
Anna, 2022
Watercolour
Collection of the artist

Riaz Mehmood was born in north western Pakistan. An ethnic Pashtun, Mehmood is a member of the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan.

Mehmood has been interested in drawing since his childhood. His earlier influences were observing and seeing the art on trucks in Pakistan, the craft of cinema billboard paintings, and the hand-drawn and painted posters, eid cards, illustrations and pictures in children's books. After receiving a degree in Civil Engineering Mehmood moved to Lahore where he and his brother started a small 3D animation and graphic design company. While working with his brother his interests in art grew.

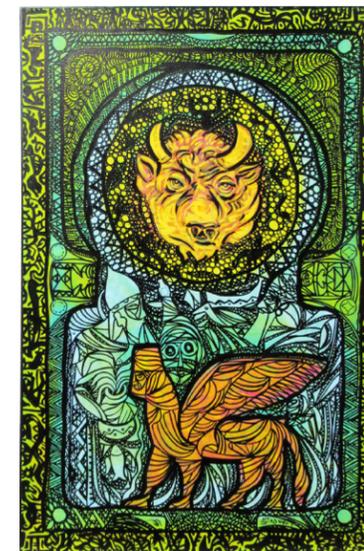
Despite his interest he was unable to attend art school in Lahore. He heard, however, that he could attend art programs in Canada so in 2000 he emigrated to Canada. In 2001 he started courses at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) in Toronto and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in 2005. He later moved to Windsor, Ontario, to do his Masters Degree from 2010 to 2012.

Mehmood moved to Edmonton in 2019 and has continued his art practice. His art work focuses on the Pashtun people and others from the region he comes from. As he expresses:

Being an artist you have a voice and I want to use that voice to inform; to talk about Pashtun people.

While his creativity focuses on a specific group of people, however, he is also trying to tackle the big issues we face as human beings: issues such as resource distribution, the distribution of wealth, conflict and stereotypes. He also strives to bring to people's attention the fact that people from other cultures have the same desires and rights as anyone else and that we are all similar.

Being an artist, all we can do is bring the beauty or ugliness we see to the front. I want the viewer to think about other possibilities and other ways of thinking: to question stereotypes derived from colonial times.



Aboud Salman
Lion of Babylon, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Aboud Salman

Aboud Salman was born in the town of Al Myadin, Syria, on the banks of the Euphrates River. He had a successful art studio in his hometown and also had a career as a high school art teacher throughout the Middle East. While practicing as an artist in Syria he had art exhibitions throughout the Middle East and Europe.

The Arab Spring of 2011 and resulting civil war in Syria turned Salman's world upside down. His artworks were perceived as critical of Syrian political structures by both sides in the conflict and he received death threats. As a result, he and his family were forced to leave Syria and moved as refugees to Lebanon, where he stayed for six years. Salman's sister-in-law, who lives in Edmonton, sponsored Aboud and his family to relocate to Canada and he arrived with his wife and four sons in Edmonton in 2017.

Aboud Salman has been making art since he was a child. Though his family were Bedouin farmers, he grew up in an artistic environment as his mother was a weaver and carpet maker as were other relatives. As he relates, his mother was his teacher and constantly encouraged his artistic efforts and gave him advice on his work. While he always loved art, however, there were no art classes offered at his school and so he took his drawings to the walls of the town, becoming an early graffiti artist as well.

Salman's paintings, drawings and fabric pieces are a reflection of and commentary on his experiences and the life and environments that surround him. In his works he tries to relate Arabic calligraphy with contour lines and figuration and attempts to liberate calligraphy from its religious context. The colours, lines, shapes, and images in his works are highly symbolic of his experiences, memories, people he knows and the history and culture of both his homeland and Canada. As he expresses, he is always telling a story and conveying meaning in his work.