

Afghanistan My Love: Aga Khan Museum's new exhibition invites visitors to see Afghanistan in a different light and engages communities to connect and co-create

Interactive mural and artwork by ArtLords and captivating images and textiles designed using Microsoft Word by Shaheer Zazai combine to shift perspectives and showcase the hope and perseverance that lives at the heart of Afghanistan

TORONTO, CANADA – October 2022. A one-of-a-kind exhibition at the Aga Khan Museum will bring to light new perspectives on Afghanistan – driven by the creativity and resilience of its people. From October 8, 2022, until April 10, 2023, [*Afghanistan My Love*](#) will share messages of determination, empathy, and kindness by bringing together inspiring and thought-provoking murals alongside contemporary artworks and textiles woven in Afghanistan.

The exhibition, curated by Special Projects Curator Marianne Fenton, will consist of two parts. First, visitors will discover murals and artwork created by ArtLords, a global grassroots movement that promotes messages of peace in Afghanistan through street art, theatre, and community outreach. In addition to exploring captivating artwork transferred from Kabul, guests will have an opportunity to participate in painting a mural designed by ArtLords on select dates throughout the exhibition run.

The second part of the exhibition will feature unique work from Afghan-Canadian multi-disciplinary artist, Shaheer Zazai. On display will be a collection of digitally created images as well as carpets conceptualized and rendered by Zazai in Microsoft Word and then woven in Afghanistan by a group of local women.

"In line with the Museum's mandate to foster intercultural dialogue and promote mutual understanding through the arts, this exhibition aims to showcase Afghanistan and its people through the lens of their inspiring and thought-provoking creativity," says the Museum's Director and CEO, Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis. "The artists in this exhibition demonstrate how art can be a powerful vehicle for communicating hope, determination, and dedication during times of adversity. They provide a sense of Afghanistan that goes well beyond a far away, physical place – it is a home, a memory, and an identity. As global citizens, ArtLords and Shaheer Zazai consider what it means to be Afghan in the present moment and use their art to promote intercultural understanding."

While the works of art from the two headliners are strikingly different, what unites them is the message their art is sending. Both artists see this exhibition as an opportunity to inspire change and showcase their home country, beyond misconceptions, as a complex yet vibrant place full of hope and tenacity in the face of adversity.

"I believe that public murals are the tools that can transform the way people think. They can encourage critical thinking and inspire kindness and empathy" says ArtLords founder Omaid Sharifi. "We want to make art accessible to everyone who wants to expand their worldview, beyond just the streets of Kabul. Our art creates shared experiences showcasing that common effort can bring about peace."

The Museum created this exhibition to serve as an inclusive platform for intercultural co-creation and dialogue for everyone, including local Afghan-Canadian communities.

“Members of the Afghan community don’t have many platforms where they can come and see something that they can relate to and be able to participate in,” shares Shaheer Zazai. “*Afghanistan My Love* is created with this in mind – to become a safe space for the community to come together and celebrate what it means to be Afghan.”

About the Aga Khan Museum

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Museum’s mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage while often reflecting, through both its permanent and temporary exhibitions, how cultures connect with one another. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto’s Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

About ArtLords

Established in 2014, ArtLords is a global grassroots movement that combines art and activism to promote a message of peace, empathy and kindness in Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Middle East through street art, theatre, and community outreach. ArtLords campaigns for peace, social transformation, and accountability in Afghanistan and across the world by sparking visual dialogue and making art accessible.

About Shaheer Zazai

With a focus on exploring and investigating the development of cultural identity in the present geopolitical climate and diaspora, Afghan-Canadian contemporary artist Shaheer Zazai draws inspiration from gardens and traditional Afghan carpets. Intrigued by the creative power that exists within limitations and parameters, Zazai’s intricate designs are conceptualized on Microsoft Word and woven in Kabul by a group of weavers.

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