

The Aga Khan Museum Will Celebrate the Life and Impact of Rumi in a New Exhibition Opening This Spring

The thought-provoking exhibition will explore the life and impact of one of history's most renowned poets, marking the 750th anniversary of his passing.

TORONTO, CANADA – May 3, 2023 – Opening May 13, [Rumi](#) invites visitors on a fascinating journey through the life and legacy of poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Muhammad of Balkh (d. 1273). In a time where uncertainty has been one of few constants, Rumi's words continue to touch the hearts of many, acting as a beacon of peace and love. Despite countless interpretations and translations of his work, his transformative messages have endured, providing solace and guidance in a world that often feels out of control.

Rumi's words have become familiar to audiences all over the globe, appearing everywhere, from social media to visual art. The exhibition will introduce visitors to the mystic behind the poetry, exploring his early life in Central Asia, experiences with displacement and migration, transformation into a master Sufi, and the multiple ways in which his words have and continue to impact arts and culture — from 16th-century painter, Sadeqi Beg to iconic pop star, Beyoncé.

The exhibition combines historical masterpieces with eye-opening contemporary artworks. The former include manuscripts, paintings, and artifacts from the Aga Khan Museum's Collections, including a rare, illustrated copy of Rumi's *Masnavi*, one of the most renowned works of Sufi poetry and a landmark of world literature. *Rumi* will also showcase objects from the collections of prestigious global institutions, such as the V&A, the Louvre, and the Met, alongside three art installations commissioned by the Aga Khan Museum by notable artists:

- Hangama Amiri — *Distance Between Homes* is a textile installation that invites visitors to consider how lost objects can give shape to feelings of in-betweenness and fragmentation. The Afghan-Canadian artist's installation references her own experiences with displacement, which mirror that of Rumi.
- Erdem Taşdelen — *The Dream That Must Be Interpreted* is an audio installation that follows the story of four characters awakening from transformative spiritual experiences — inviting visitors to contemplate the varied ways in which Rumi has been translated, interpreted, appropriated, and appreciated as a spiritual figure.
- Simin Keramati — *The Elephant in the Dark* is an interactive installation that casts a contemporary lens on one of Rumi's most beloved tales. Keramati challenges visitors' perceptions, engaging their curiosity and sense of wonder.

"In this exhibition, we seek to unravel who Rumi was and to view him with clarity in his historical and literary context — to separate the facts about his life and writing from his later reception," says Dr. Michael Chagnon, Curator at the Aga Khan Museum. "In addition to showcasing new discoveries related to Rumi's poetry in our own Collections, placing these objects in dialogue with contemporary works that respond to the exhibition's core themes emphasizes the breadth of his impact and the enduring timelessness of his teachings."

“In times of upheaval and uncertainty, Rumi’s message of peace and love resonates today as powerfully as ever. In this exhibition, historical and contemporary arts come together to speak of his lasting legacy and impact,” says Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO of the Aga Khan Museum. “At the same time, the *Rumi* exhibition aims to remind us that the arts, just as Rumi’s work itself, are uniquely powerful in providing hope, building bridges, and bringing people together across and beyond differences in the name of peace.”

Along with the exhibition, visitors can enjoy an exciting program which includes:

- [Rumi Nations](#) – An exhibition opening celebration that combines the words of Rumi, music, and the turn of the dervish in an inspiring showcase that features captivating artists and musicians, including a performance of original poetry in the Sufi tradition by Tawhida Tanya Evanson.
- **Massey College x Aga Khan Museum: The Global Legacy of Rumi** – A series of conversations that bring together notable speakers from across diverse disciplines to delve deeper into the exhibition’s themes.
- [Listen.](#) – A meditative installation emerging out of the centre reflective pool in the Aga Khan Park. Inspired by words attributed to Rumi, Matt Donovan and Hallie Siegal’s ephemeral installation appears as a jumble of upside-down letters, inviting visitors to decipher its reflection in the water.
- [Cultured Pallets: Aga Khan Museum](#) – The installation by Iranian-Canadian artist Soheila Esfahani uses over 100 shipping pallets, laser-etched with a geometric pattern, to capture the feeling of in-betweenness and metaphorically represent the ongoing dialogue between cultures.
- [Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival](#) – This free exhibition in the Aga Khan Park and lower-level gallery features mesmerizing photographs by Italian-Senegalese Sufi artist Maimouna Guerresi. Her work evokes an intimate perspective on human spirituality in relation to mysticism, shedding a new light on community and the soul, heavily influenced by Sufi traditions.
- [Rhythms of Canada](#) – The four-day festival returns from June 30 to July 3 with an exhilarating program filled with musical performances by local and international artists, delicious food, and activities for all ages.

Rumi has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation.

The exhibition is presented by Sunray Group and supported by Texas Jasmine and Lizna & Farhan Kabani.

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). Through permanent and temporary exhibitions, educational activities and performing arts, the Museum’s mission is to spark wonder, curiosity, and understanding of Muslim cultures and their connection with other cultures through the arts. 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.

– 30–

FOR PRESS INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Olena Gisy
Porter Novelli
olena.gisys@porternovelli.com
416.839.8227

Kelly Frances
Marketing and Communications Director
Aga Khan Museum
press@agakhanmuseum.org
416.858.8735