



Press Release
Museum of Contemporary
Art Detroit

For Immediate Release:
July 21, 2017

**MOCAD presents Dana Awartani's first solo museum show
and US premiere as the final installment of its Detroit
City/Detroit Affinities series.**



Image: Detail of *Icosahedron Within a Dodecahedron* from *The Platonic Solids Duals*, 2016. Image Credit: Courtesy of the artist, Athr, and MOCAD.

DETROIT CITY: DANA AWARTANI

September 8, 2017 – January 7, 2018

Detroit, MI—For Dana Awartani, a Palestinian-Saudi artist who lives and works in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, geometric patterns express both the rational and the spiritual parts of us. Using

mathematical principles, numerically devised symbols, and traditional Islamic patterning, Awartani creates paintings, installations, sculptures, performances, and textile works that are as rich with meaning as they are beautiful, elegant, and precise. Awartani situates her artistic practice at the juncture between tradition and the now. Though her forms, methodologies, and interests are largely rooted in the study and understanding of traditional Islamic forms, Awartani is keenly interested in the translation, translocation, and transformation of these forms into our contemporary, global world.

Though the forms explored in Awartani's artworks are derived from Islamic traditions, part of her interest in these geometries is that they are also universal. Borrowed from and reflected in nature, present in the religious iconographies of many global religions, and reliant upon the rules of mathematics, Awartani's geometric patterns can be interpreted and appreciated through many different lenses. Striking a careful balance between the conceptual and the technical elements of art practice—Awartani pursued both conventional contemporary fine art as well as traditional arts as a student in London—Awartani creates hypnotic visual stories that exist in that rich territory between abstraction and representation.



Image: Still from *I Went Away and Forgot You. A While Ago I Remembered. I Remembered I'd Forgotten You. I Was Dreaming*, 2017. Image Credit: Courtesy of the artist, Athr, and MOCAD.

In Awartani's visual world, the curve of a line or the number of points on a star convey specific meanings. Her paintings and installations echo traditional Islamic artworks, which use complex geometric patterns to symbolize the Divine. In the traditional artworks that she aims to revive for our contemporary era, each color, line, shape, and flourish is part of a story; in Awartani's works, this symbolism remains and is expanded through her own innovations. While so much of her

practice focuses on revitalizing the neglected methods of traditional Islamic art, Awartani is not content to replicate the ancient in the present. Her works consider issues relevant to our contemporary moment—like gender, religion, faith, and loss— speaking of the present through the visual language of the past.

Detroit Affinities is curated by MOCAD's Susanne Feld Hilberry Senior Curator at Large Jens Hoffmann.

DETROIT CITY is comprised of three concurrent series:

Detroit Affinities (exhibition), Detroit Speaks (education), and Detroit Stages (performance). This multi-year research program is one of the most ambitious undertakings to date at MOCAD.

DETROIT CITY is supported by the Ric & Suzanne Kayne Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Exhibition support is provided by the A. Alfred Taubman Foundation.

Calendar entry:

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Editor's note: Installation images will be available after the exhibition opens on September 8, 2017. The list of participants is subject to change. Please check with MOCAD before publishing. Interviews are available upon request. High resolution images with captions and press release can be downloaded at <http://mocadetroit.org/about/press/>. Information about Detroit City can be found at <http://mocadetroit.org/past-exhibitions/>.

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The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) is an innovative addition to Detroit's vibrant Midtown neighborhood, and functions as a hub for the exploration of emerging ideas in the contemporary arts. As a non-collecting institution, MOCAD is responsive to the cultural content of our time, fueling crucial dialogue, collaboration, and public engagement. The Museum is located between the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Wayne State University, and the College for Creative Studies. The cavernous 22,000 square foot building, a former auto dealership, has been simply renovated to maintain its raw historic character. MOCAD's ambitious series of public programs includes lectures, musical performances, films, literary readings and educational activities for area youth. Mobile Homestead, by late artist Mike Kelley, is a permanent art work located on the grounds of the Museum. It is both a public sculpture and a private, personal construction – based on the artist's childhood home on Palmer Road in Westland. The ground floor serves as a community event space by and for a diverse public, as Kelley intended. MOCAD is generously supported by individual members, private and corporate foundations, and government agencies. More information can be found at mocadetroit.org.

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