

For Immediate Release

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## Hayv Kahraman Solo Exhibition Opens at the Moody Center for the Arts on January 12, 2024

*New and recent works presented in the exhibition Hayv Kahraman: The Foreign in Us highlight the artist's Iraqi-Kurdish heritage and her research-driven practice*



Hayv Kahraman, *NeuroBust no.5*, cropped, 2022. Oil on linen. Fredrik Nilsen Studio. Courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias, London.

**November 15, 2023 [Houston, Texas]** -- The Moody Center for the Arts presents the work of Hayv Kahraman (b. 1981, Baghdad, Iraq), opening January 12, 2024. *The Foreign in Us*, on view through May 11, 2024, is the artist's first solo exhibition in Texas. The presentation includes new and recent works informed by the artist's Iraqi-Kurdish heritage and experience as a refugee while highlighting her research-driven practice. Through her profound imagery and investigation into the decolonization of the body and nature, Kahraman challenges fear and apprehension of otherness, advocating instead for compassion and acceptance.

"We're honored to present Hayv Kahraman's recent work at the Moody," notes Alison Weaver, Suzanne Deal Booth Executive Director. "Her powerful imagery, deeply informed by her personal history, intersects with the fields of bioscience, social history, and public policy in ways we hope will invite conversations across the campus and community."

In the artist's unique compositions, questions inspired by immunology and microbiology, as well as history, are approached through the lens of the othered body, often represented in contortionist postures as a means to interrogate normative gender constructions and racial stereotypes that can adversely affect migrant groups. This conceptual focus and innovative practice are presented through a selection of more than forty paintings and drawings from public and private collections in the United States and abroad. In addition to several large-scale canvases, the exhibition will feature intimate drawings that demonstrate the artist's meticulous draftsmanship and mastery of line and color.

"I'm thrilled to bring these bodies of work together at the Moody. They are at once extremely personal yet heavily researched and mark a shift in the trajectory of my work,"

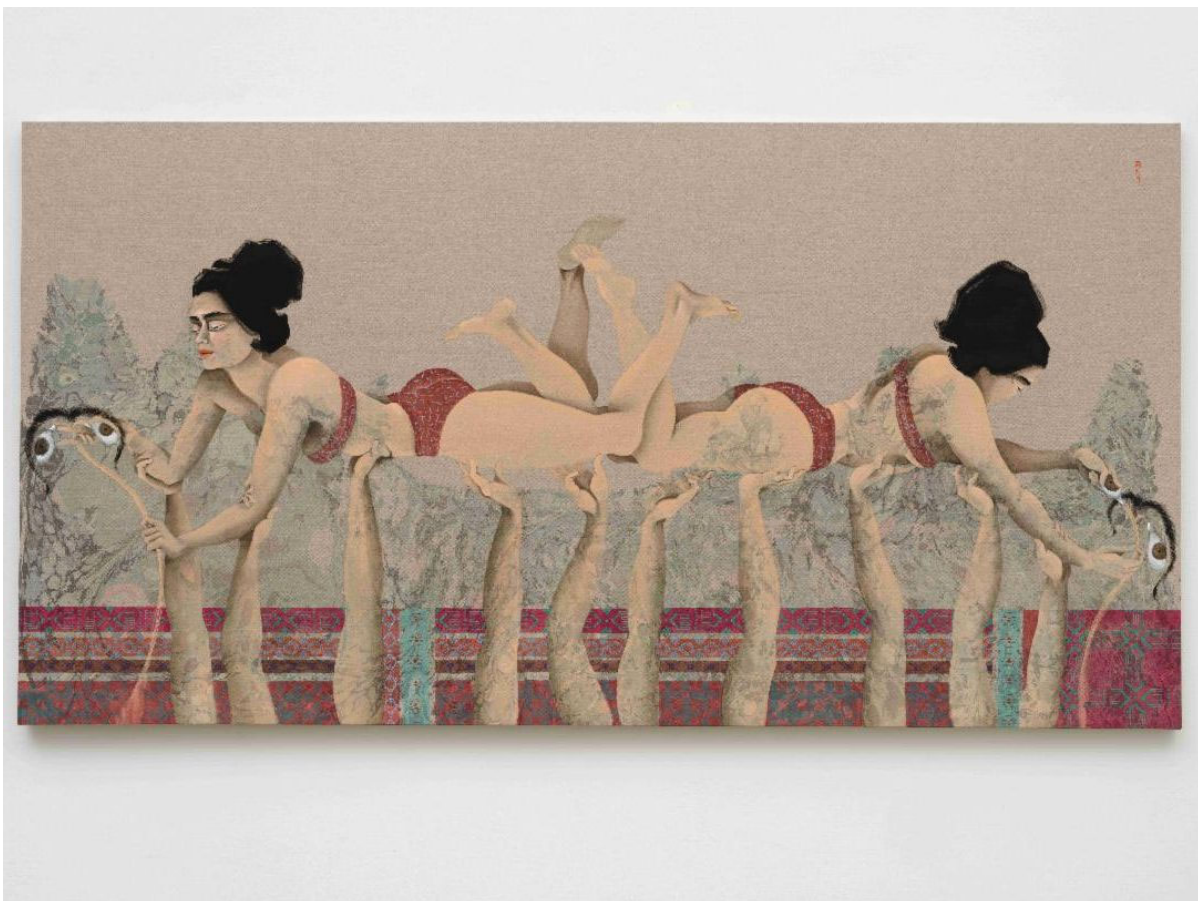
said Hayv Kahraman. “To have these pieces in dialogue will elucidate the commonalities between the series and perhaps create additional divergent and speculative ideas.”

Notably, the figures that Kahraman depicts, despite being based on her own body, are an expression of a collective experience rather than an individual one, and challenge Western ideals about beauty canons and body policies while calling for a decolonization of the body. The violence conveyed through their twisted limbs alludes to the pain of diasporic life and psyche. These scenes are drawn from memories of the artist’s own history—from the trauma of displacement at a young age to reconnecting with her Kurdish heritage—and inspire the visually captivating compositions that connect her recent work to themes of tolerance and healing.

Frauke V. Josenhans, the curator of the exhibition, observes that “Kahraman’s entrancing works reference different pictorial traditions—from Persian calligraphy and Florentine Mannerism to Asian calligraphy and Ebru marbling— as a means of challenging our views of what we consider ‘other’ and unveiling underlying biases in our society. Kahraman’s female figures confront the viewer, telling stories about violence and rejection, while at the same time offering a path to healing.”

[Access the press kit: press release in Word, promotional images, and checklist.](#)

## About the Exhibition



Hayv Kahraman, *Untitled*, 2023. Oil on linen. Courtesy of the Artist, Pilar Corrias, London, Jack Shainman Gallery, NY, and Vielmetter Los Angeles.

Over the last five years, Kahraman’s work changed formally and technically as she began to experiment with and research new elements that link the refugee experience to historical and scientific research. Spurred by her mother’s passing, Kahraman has developed an interest in bioscience, exploring the semantic implications of “invasive others” within the fields of immunology and microbiology. In her most recent work, such as the series of *Untitled* paintings, Kahraman delves into colonial botany and more specifically the work of the eighteenth-century Swedish biologist Carl von Linné (1707–1778) who ordered the natural world through a universal, latinized system, thereby erasing Indigenous knowledge and further expanding Eurocentric belief systems.

Paintings in the exhibition such as *NeuroBust no. 4* and *Moustache-gut-brain axis* consider physical and emotional states by drawing attention to the gut, also called the second brain by neuro-intestinal researchers. By incorporating the digestive system into her painted and drawn compositions, the artist focuses on the intimate connection between trauma and vital organs. In other works, including *Torshi Vine* and *Entanglements with torshi no. 2*, Kahraman paints with *torshi*, the pickled vegetables of many Middle Eastern cuisines, to draw attention to the importance of bacteria for physical health. Following the same line of inquiry, Kahraman has created paintings, such as *Entanglements and squat on Flax 1*, produced through bacterial activity on handmade flax fabric.

Over the past two years, Kahraman has worked with marbling techniques to examine the historical significance and meaning of the process in artistic traditions, and the chemical reaction of the elements on various surfaces. These multilayered works also incorporate

colorful geometric patterns that draw specifically from her Kurdish ancestry and reference tapestries and architecture. Several of these marbled paintings are shown for the first time in the United States and highlight this recent development in her work.

Kahraman's paintings and drawings that are featured in the exhibition *The Foreign in Us* are an invitation to the viewer to consider reframing our relationship with difference in order to choose collaboration over fear.

The exhibition is curated by Frauke V. Josenhans, Curator, Moody Center for the Arts, and is made possible by the Moody Center for the Arts Founders Circle and the Elizabeth Lee Moody Excellence Fund for the Arts.

The exhibition design is by MILLIØNS and the graphic design is by Miko McGinty Inc.

The Moody Center for the Arts will publish an exhibition catalog in the spring of 2024, distributed by Gregory R. Miller Publishing. The publication will feature original writing by Hayv Kahraman, and an essay by Miriam Ticktin, Professor of Anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center. The publication is made possible by the Moody Center for the Arts the Rice University Art Gallery Endowment, Pilar Corrias, London, Jack Shainman Gallery, NY, and Vielmetter Los Angeles.



Hayv Kahraman, *Swallowing Antibodies*, 2021. Oil on linen. Courtesy of the Artist, Pilar Corrias, London, Jack Shainman Gallery, NY, and Vielmetter Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Mclane.

## About the Artist

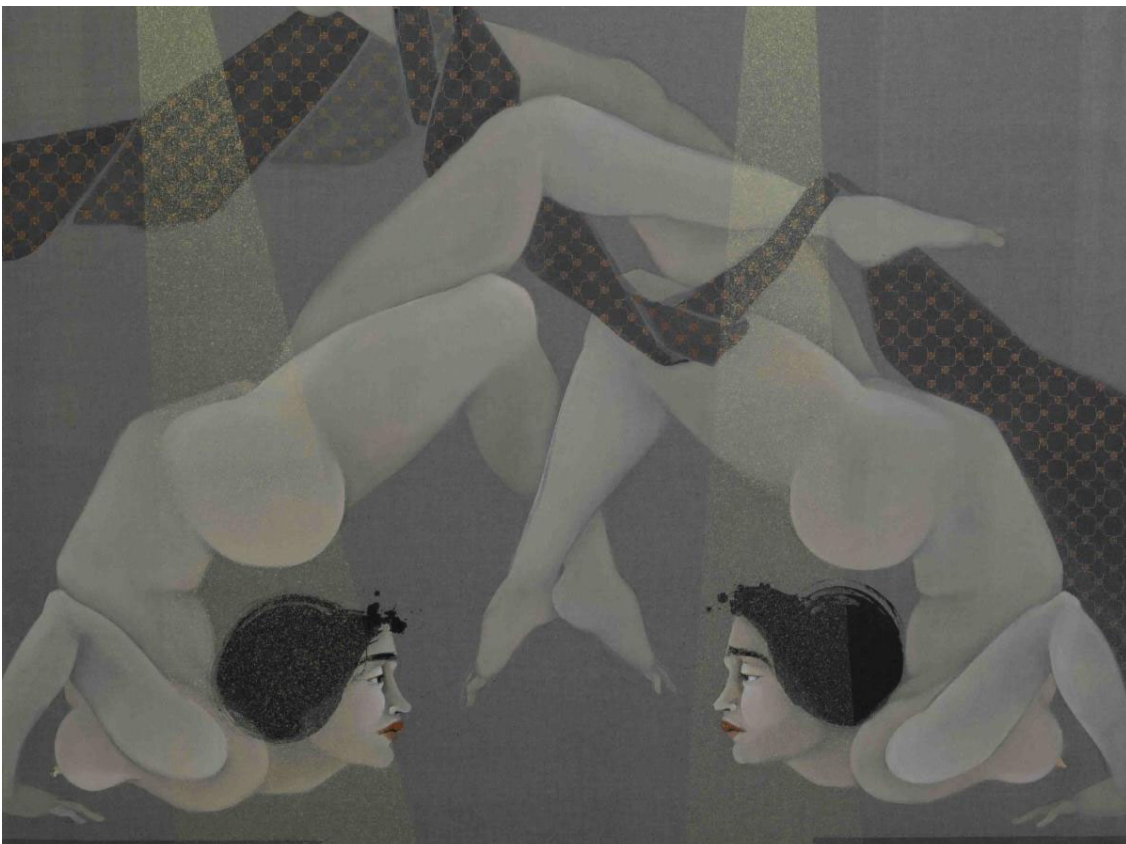


Hayv Kahraman, 2022. Portrait by Daniel Gurton. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

Hayv Kahraman (b. Baghdad, Iraq, 1981) fled from her native country as a child and settled in Sweden with her family, where she grew up. She studied at the University of Umeå, Sweden, and at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, Italy. She now lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Kahraman has had solo exhibitions at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia; Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA; CAM, St. Louis, MO; Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA. She has received the Excellence in Cultural Creativity Award from the Global Thinkers Forum. Kahraman's work is held in various collections, including the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Birmingham Museum of Art, AL; The Rubell Family Collection, FL; Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL; British Museum, London, UK; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar.

## Special Events



Friday, January 12, 2024, 6–8 p.m. | Opening reception with the artist

Thursday, March 28, 2024, 6–8 p.m. | Roundtable discussion on refugee experiences and policies in partnership with the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

Saturday, April 13, 2–5 pm | Dimensions Variable: Artmaking, Food, and Performances inspired by the exhibition.

Saturday, May 11, 2024, 2–5 p.m. | Closing event and book launch for *Hayv Kahraman: The Foreign in Us*



### **About the Moody Center for the Arts**

Since its opening in 2017, the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University has dedicated its resources to encouraging creative thinking and original expression, enriching curricular innovation, and promoting cross-campus and community collaboration through transformative encounters with the arts. A public-facing institution, the Moody serves as a connection between the arts at Rice and the greater Houston community.

The Moody mounts three exhibitions a year in its award-winning building, curates numerous temporary and permanent public art installations throughout Rice's campus, and hosts performances, conversations, classes, and hands-on workshops. By centering these public and open initiatives on generative partnerships with artists, scholars, and students from various disciplines, the Moody presents unexpected and everchanging entry points into the arts which bridge communities and areas of interest.

[Learn more about our mission.](#)

### **General Hours & Admission:**

Exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are closed on Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public. For upcoming events, parking information, and registration as applicable, visit [moody.rice.edu](http://moody.rice.edu).

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### **About Rice University**

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,879 undergraduates and 2,861 graduate students, Rice's undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just one reason why Rice is ranked No. 1 for quality of life and for lots of race/class interaction and No. 2 for happiest students by the Princeton Review. Rice is also rated as the best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance.