



# RICE

**For Immediate Release**

Contact Erin Rolfs  
Marketing and Communications Director  
Moody Center for the Arts

[erin.rolfs@rice.edu](mailto:erin.rolfs@rice.edu)

713.348.4115

## **The Moody Center for the Arts Announces Summer 2022 Exhibition, *Baseera Khan: Weight on History***

*The first solo exhibition in Houston for the Texas-born, New York-based multidisciplinary artist Baseera Khan opens June 3, 2022.*



Baseera Khan, *Mosque Lamp and Prayer Carpet Green*, from *Law of Antiquities* (detail), 2021. Archival inkjet print, artist's custom frame. Image courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery, New York. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

**HOUSTON [March 29, 2022]**--The Moody Center for the Arts will host the first solo exhibition in Houston for the Texas-born, New York-based multidisciplinary artist Baseera Khan, opening Friday, June 3, 2022. The exhibition [Baseera Khan: Weight on History](#) will feature new and recent work, including a monumental sculptural commission, that collectively offers a means to critique existing power structures and envision alternative futures.

Khan, a self-identified femme Muslim American, raised in Denton, Texas, explores the complex and often overwhelming issues of commodification, politics, and the body through pop culture, architecture, fashion, and music. Shifting seamlessly between mediums and materials, the artist creates spaces of beauty and safety, while pointing to structures that systematically exclude or misrepresent marginalized populations. The combination of disruption and reprieve offered by *Weight on History* allows visitors to linger in the visual allure of the works on view while contemplating difficult issues surrounding cultural prejudice, thus creating an entry point toward imagining a more inclusive society.

“We are thrilled to present the work of Baseera Khan in Houston, which includes an ambitious commission and an exciting selection of the artist’s seminal works made in the last five years,” said Ylinka Barotto, guest curator for the Moody Center for the Arts. “This exhibition highlights Khan’s extraordinarily multifaceted practice. Conceived with equal measures of rigorous research and humor, their work allows Moody visitors to explore today’s issues of discrimination, identity, and gender in pointed and profound ways.”

Promotional images, a checklist, and interview requests can be directed to Erin Rolfs, [erin.rolfs@rice.edu](mailto:erin.rolfs@rice.edu).

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## About the Exhibition

At the center of the exhibition is the new commission, *Painful Arc (Shoulder-High)* (2022), which expands upon the artist’s interest in architectural archetypes and the authority they represent. Using commonplace materials, including wood and installation foam, Khan renders a classical Islamic arch clad with images of the artist’s body seemingly climbing the structure of the arch, coupled with recurrent symbols from their practice such as the standing microphone. As a result, the installation raises questions about equity, access, and how architectural histories--the monuments and ideas contained therein--wield power through the illusion of fixedness.

“I hope visitors can feel the weight of *Painful Arc* while also understanding its weightlessness,” said Baseera Khan. “In some ways, we need to know our history, but at the same time, we can’t let it define us.”

From the banalities of casual conversation to the implications of fashion, Khan’s works delve into the ways in which daily life can be a radical political act. A multi-part video work that parodies reality TV culture, *By Faith* (2020), features Khan in conversation with a group of interlocutors in an environment that resembles the artist’s Brooklyn apartment, as they discuss identity, history, love, and art. *Acoustic Sound Blankets* (2017) is a sculptural garment made of thick, black, sound-absorbing material, featuring circular apertures embroidered with golden motifs. This design, inspired by traditional female heirlooms belonging to Khan’s family, formally recalls orthodox Muslim women’s clothing, while the dense material references a safe space in which bodies and identities can exist free from cultural judgment. Similarly, a series of

*Psychedelic Prayer Rugs* (2017) combines the shape of traditional spiritual objects with imagery and statements that reference historical liberation efforts as well as the artist's own ideas of self-government, suggesting a different interpretation of worship.

Questions of identity and the imbued meanings of design and architecture are referenced in *Features [Feat. ]* (2018) and *Second Skin* (2022). The former is a mirrored hanging chandelier transformed into a disco ball that rotates to the beats of Khan's album, *I Am an Archive*. The latter is a large-scale sculpture resembling ancient ruins or sliced columns whose scalloped edges are covered in Kashmiri rugs. Both works convey a feeling of opulence while recalling the passage of time and interrogating how we interpret history. Complementing the installation is a series of photographic collages, displayed as multi-layered compositions overlain with colored Plexiglas fragments. Comprised of clippings from encyclopedias, historical material, and photographs of Khan's body, each frame relays a specific event, thereby interlacing the artist's familial histories with larger narratives.

Overall, Khan's personal navigation between the present and the past speaks to the marginalization of Islamic culture in the United States, as well as to the complexity of understanding seemingly disparate states of assimilation and displacement. The exhibition invites visitors to consider what elements of the past we bring forward and how to bring those existing on the periphery toward the center.

*Baseera Khan: Weight on History* is co-organized by the Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, where the exhibition will travel following its Houston debut. It is co-curated by Ylinka Barotto, Guest Curator, Moody Center for the Arts, and Amara Antilla, Senior Curator at Large, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati. It will be on view at the Moody from June 3 – August 27, 2022, and at the CAC from September 30, 2022 – February 11, 2023

This exhibition is made possible by the Edith and Bernard Stolbun Family Foundation. Major support is provided by the Brad and Leslie Bucher Artist Endowment and the Louis Sudler Endowment. Additional support is provided by the Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation, the Tamara de Kuffner Fund, the Kilgore Endowment Fund, and the Sewall Endowment.

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Baseera Khan, *Earrings with Attached Headdress Pink*, from *Law of Antiquities*, 2021. Archival inkjet print, artist's custom frame. Image courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery, New York. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

## About the Artist

Baseera Khan (b. 1980, Denton, Texas) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Awarded numerous grants and fellowships including UOVO Prize; BRIC Colene Brown Art Prize; Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant; and Art Matters, Khan's work is part of public collections including Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Kadist, Paris, France, and San Francisco, CA; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. Recent selected solo and two-person exhibitions include Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Kitchen, New York; and Simone Subal Gallery, New York. Recent selected group exhibitions include Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; NOMA, New Orleans, LA; Gracie Mansion Conservancy, New York, NY; LACE, Los Angeles, CA.

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Opening reception of *Soundwaves: Experimental Strategies in Art + Music*, photo by Newton Huyhn.

## Special Events

Friday, June 3, 2022, 6 – 8 pm, [opening reception for Baseera Khan: Weight on History](#). Free and open to the public, the reception will feature a brief introduction by the artist Baseera Khan.

Fridays, June 10, 17, and 24, 12 p.m. Mind + Body Series. Free and open to the public, this recurring meditation and yoga class will take place in the Moody's galleries.

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### 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.

**Website:** [moody.rice.edu](http://moody.rice.edu)

**Social Media:** @theMoodyArts | #MoodyHTX

**Phone:** +1 713.348.ARTS

**Address:** Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University

6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005  
(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

**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 Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public. For schedule, tickets, and prices as applicable, visit [moody.rice.edu](http://moody.rice.edu).

**Directions & Parking:**

The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only.

For campus maps, visit [www.rice.edu/maps](http://www.rice.edu/maps).

**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.

**Press Contact**

Erin Rolfs | +1 713-348-4115 | [erin.rolfs@rice.edu](mailto:erin.rolfs@rice.edu)



**Moody Center for the Arts  
Rice University**

6100 Main Street, MS-480  
Houston, TX 77005-1827  
[moody.rice.edu](http://moody.rice.edu)  
713-348-ARTS



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