

# LISSON GALLERY

## Press Release

## Wael Shawky

55 Main Street  
East Hampton, NY  
September 30 – October 17, 2021

For the latest exhibition in East Hampton, Lisson Gallery is pleased to present a series of paintings and works on paper by Wael Shawky that serve as a story board for the artist's critically acclaimed films. For his first solo exhibition in East Hampton, Shawky presents works that reference his *Al Araba Al Madfuna* (2012-2016) film trilogy. The works tell the personal story of his travels through Upper Egypt, intertwined with Mohamed Mustagab's short story *Dairout al Sharif*.

Regarded as one of the most important artists in the Middle East, Wael Shawky pursues the reinterpretation of established historical narratives through multiple mediums, emphasizing the frailty of cultural memory by retelling the annals of the Arab world with an amalgam of truth and fantasy. *Al Araba Al Madfuna*, filmed in the Pharaoh Seti and Osirion temples in Northern Egypt, is a restaging of an event he witnessed during his travels; local Egyptians digging tunnels in search of ancient riches. The three large paintings in the presentation feature motifs from the film. Originally trained as a painter, Shawky allows himself to explore the more fantastical facets of his films in the whimsical two-dimensional works. Chromatic landscapes and supernatural beings are adorned with palaces and places of worship, populated with royalty and ancient spiritual figures.

The East Hampton presentation runs in conjunction with an online exhibition that features works on paper from Wael Shawky's ongoing *Cabaret Crusades* drawings series, shown for the first time earlier this year at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas. Two triptychs from the series hang alongside the three paintings in the show, further illustrating the relationship between the artist's films and his compositions on canvas and paper. The *Cabaret Crusades* series depicts the Crusades from an Arab viewpoint, utilizing the work of historians and geographers, such as Ibn al-Qalanisi, Ibn Jubayr, and Ibn al-Athir. Scenes in the film are acted out through Murano glass marionettes, the designs for which are featured in the triptychs on display. Shawky's works venerate historical narratives while drawing a line to world events today. The themes of sacred and geographical opposition echo evenly in the present and the past.

The Wael Shawky presentation follows solo exhibitions at the gallery by [Masaomi Yasunaga](#), [Roy Colmer](#), [Leon Polk Smith](#), [Ceal Floyer](#), [Laure Prouvost](#), [Sean Scully](#), [Ryan Gander](#), [Olga de Amaral](#) and [Rodney Graham](#). Lisson Gallery's East Hampton space will continue its focused format featuring both influential, historical artworks and debuting new bodies of work in an experimental, intimate setting. An exhibition of work by [Ted Stamm](#) follows the Shawky presentation, from October 21 – November 7, 2021. The gallery is open to the public each Thursday through Saturday, from 11am to 5pm, Sundays from 11 – 4pm and Wednesdays by appointment.

## About Wael Shawky

Based on extensive periods of research and enquiry, Wael Shawky's work tackles notions of national, religious and artistic identity through film, performance and storytelling. Whether instructing Bedouin children to act out the construction of an airport runway in the desert or organizing a heavy metal concert in a remote Egyptian village, Shawky frames contemporary culture through the lens of historical tradition and vice versa. Mixing truth and fiction, childlike wonder and spiritual doctrine, Shawky has staged epic recreations of the medieval clashes between Muslims and Christians in his trilogy of puppets and marionettes – titled *Cabaret Crusades: The Horror Show Files* (2010), *The Path to Cairo* (2012) and *The Secrets of Karbala* (2015) – while his

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504 West 24th Street, New York 10011 | 508 West 24th Street, New York 10011 | +1 212 505 6431

three-part film, *Al Araba Al Madfuna*, uses child actors to recount poetic myths, paying homage, rather than mere lip-service, to the important narratives of yesteryear.

Wael Shawky was born in Alexandria in 1971 where he lives and works. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX, USA (2021), The Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2020), The Polygon, Vancouver, Canada (2020); ARoS, Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark (2018); Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Yinchuan, China (2017); Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy (2016); Fondazione Merz, Turin, Italy (2016); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2016); Fondazione Merz, Zurich, Switzerland (2016); MATHAF, Doha, Qatar (2015) and MoMA P.S.1, New York, NY, USA (2015); K20 Düsseldorf, Germany (2014-15); Serpentine Galleries, London, UK (2013-14); KW Contemporary Art Institute, Berlin, Germany (2012); Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2011); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (2011); Delfina Foundation, London, UK (2011) and Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy (2010). He has participated in Lahore Biennale, Lahore, Pakistan (2020); Desert X, Al Ula, Saudi Arabia (2020); 14th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (2015); the 11th Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2013); Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012); the 9th Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (2012); SITE Santa Fe Biennial, NM, USA (2008); the 9th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (2005); and the 50th Venice Biennale, Italy (2003). Recent awards include the inaugural Mario Merz Prize (2015); the Award for Filmic Oeuvre created by Louis Vuitton and Kino der Kunst (2013); the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2012); the Schering Foundation Art Award (2011), as well as The International Commissioning Grant and an award from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, in 2005. In 2010, Shawky founded the educational space MASS Alexandria.

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

## For press enquiries, please contact

David Simantov, Communications Manager  
+1 212 505 6431 (Office)  
+1 917 243 9933 (Cell)  
[davids@lissongallery.com](mailto:davids@lissongallery.com)

i: @lisson\_gallery  
t: @Lisson\_Gallery  
fb: LissonGallery  
lissongallery.com

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