

The background is a complex, dark, and textured collage. It features various elements including what appears to be a horse's head in profile, architectural structures, and abstract patterns. The color palette is dominated by dark tones with some lighter, textured areas.

**the
mosaic
rooms**



What's On Jan-Apr 2020

Contemporary Culture from the Arab World and Beyond

The Mosaic Rooms are a non-profit space dedicated to contemporary culture from the Arab world and beyond. We present a unique programme of free exhibitions, talks and special events. We are a project of the A. M. Qattan Foundation.

Curator: Abed Al Kadiri

Assistant Curator: Angelina Radakovic

Art Technicians: Kamila Janska, Scott Miles

Assistant Exhibition Designer: Meriam Soltan

Leaflet Design: Hyperkit

Homeland Under My Nails
Mohammad Omar Khalil
Selected prints (1964-present)
22 January-26 April 2020

Mohammad Omar Khalil (born 1936) is one of the most significant artists of his generation from Sudan and the Arab world. Practicing etching since the 1960s, Khalil is a master printmaker, exploring contemporary themes of identity, displacement and belonging.

This exhibition, curated by Abed Al Kadiri, opens with self-portraits and rare early works. It then explores Khalil's stylistic experimentation and the international sensibility of the artist, who trained in Sudan and Italy and, since the 1970s, has lived and worked between New York (USA) and Asilah (Morocco). The lower gallery reveals him as a collector of influences, and explores his relationship with music. Khalil's dedication to printmaking is unique in the Arab world. He is also an influential mentor who has shared his mastery of technique with students internationally.

Sudan continues to be a point of orientation for Khalil who says: "My homeland exists in my nails, it expresses itself whenever I create an artwork." This exhibition is a long overdue celebration of his life's work.



Room 1

The Flood — Early Works 1964–1967

In 1988, a disastrous flood hit Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, destroying much of the city including the artist's own district, Burri. Khalil's home and hundreds of paintings and prints created in Sudan and Italy between 1964 and 1967 were lost. The few works displayed here survived because the artist had taken them earlier to New York. He has said: "It is only that old tree that remained from my father's house and for that I shall return again."

Khalil's etchings and archival material pay homage to his homeland, Sudan — its markets, streets and people. Prints evoke memories of dust, his father building their family home from mud, his grandmother's voice and the light of a lantern in their living room.

Early self-portraits are also shown here. Khalil, now 83, has long experimented with the subject as a means of self-transformation and as a way to challenge the form and the medium.

Khalil's early experimentations in Italy, while a student at the Academy of Florence, shed light on his stylistic evolution. Refusing categorisation to any single movement, Khalil's style can be read through the experimentations and abstractions of his travels and experiences.

Sawakin (detail), 1965, 2 of 6, 15 x 19.5cm, aquatint

Cover: *Dirge*, 1986, 18 of 25, 100 x 75.5cm, etching, sugarlift, spitbiting, aquatint

Room 2

Metaphor of Blackness: 1968-2019

Khalil spent his university years visiting cities around the world, finally settling in New York in late 1967. "I loved the speed, and the ideas that were happening right and left. I decided that if I had to be an artist, this was the right place. It had to be New York." He quickly began incorporating pop culture — stamps, music and film — into his work. Khalil's smallest etching, a self-portrait the size of a postage stamp, expresses his human scale in the big city. *The Harlem Portfolio*, 5 metres long, brings together the movement, life and spirit of the neighbourhood.

A search for light and the use of black is the driving force in Khalil's work. He says: "In blackness, I see degrees and shades of rich, complicated colour, more intense than in other colours, roaring and loud."

In 1978 he took part in the first Asilah Festival in Morocco. Asilah then became a second home for Khalil, who returned annually as the festival's head of studios for three decades. In works such as *Asilah Connection* (1992) and *Memory of Asilah* (1982), he explores the materiality of light in this coastal town.

Visiting Petra in Jordan was also a turning point in both his life and art. Khalil's largest works express the magic and light of the historic kingdom in a series of triptychs.



Sacrifice, 1976, A.P (15), 50 x 40cm, etching, aquatint

Room 3

Sounds within Me: 1975-2016

Music has long been a source of inspiration for Mohamad Omar Khalil. Many of his artworks are translations of the songs and rhythms that have moved him. By pulling music apart, only to put it together again visually, he feels he is in control of life and its events.

These expressions can be read in the abstractions of works like *Tombstone Blues*, in which many significant parallels can be drawn between specific songs, such as those of Bob Dylan, and his personal life.

"Music touches me, I feel sounds going right through my body and I translate them visually. Only engraving and its technical delicacy can express these sounds within me."



Tombstone Blues, 1986, 9 of 25, etching, softground, aquatint, spitbite

Coming Up

Heba Y. Amin

13 May–16 August 2020

The Mosaic Rooms presents the first UK solo exhibition of artist Heba Y. Amin. Based in Berlin Amin is a multimedia artist from Egypt, who works with political themes and archival history, using mediums including film, photography, archival material, lecture performance and installation. Her works often take a satirical approach with serious intent, such as her work *Operation Sunken Sea*. The exhibition will present work that continues and develops existing projects, including new pieces shown for the first time.



Portrait of Woman as Dictator I, 2018 (from *Operation Sunken Sea*)

Event Highlights



Mohammad Omar Khalil in conversation with Maya Jaggi
Thursday 23 January, 7pm FREE
Artist Mohammad Omar Khalil speaks with Maya Jaggi about the current exhibition and his work spanning over 50 years.



The Dislocation of Amber and Tigers are Better Looking
Thursday 30 January, 7.30pm FREE
In this film double-bill, Hussein Shariffe depicts life in exile in Britain in the 1970s and longing for his homeland Sudan.



Reels of Revolt
Wednesday 26 February, 7pm FREE
This discussion and screening considers the recent uprisings in Algeria and Sudan and looks at cross-cultural solidarity and political resistance in North Africa.



The Scorpions
Thursday 5 March, 8pm £8
Hailing from Central Sudan and now based in London, The Scorpions bring their raw sounds to meld Arab rhythms, heavy bass and percussion.

Here are just a few events from our weekly event programme
— for the full listing see mosaicrooms.org



Linocut Workshop

Saturday 14 March, 12-4pm £20

Political cartoonist Mohammad Sabaaneh leads a linocut workshop inspired by the work of Mohammad Omar Khalil.



Sudan Retold

Thursday 26 March, 7pm FREE

Khalid Albaih, Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann and contributors discuss their new book in which 31 Sudanese creatives tell stories from their homeland.



Sudanese Kitchen

Thursday 23 April, 7-10pm £40

Share plates with friends and strangers alike, this supper club will be an immersive experience of the delicious Sudanese table.



Family Fun

**29 February, 28 March, 25 April
FREE**

Join artist Dia Batal and friends for games, stories and creative art activities celebrating Arab culture.

Top left: Image by Mohammad Sabaaneh

Top right: *One Thousand Faces of Sudan* by Ahmed Abushakeema

The Mosaic Rooms
226 Cromwell Road
London SW5 0SW
020 7370 9990
mosaicrooms.org

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