



Paradise Has Many Gates by Ajlan Gharem

**MEDIA RELEASE
JUNE 21, 2018**

Saudi Arabian artist Ajlan Gharem launches the 2018-2020 Vancouver Biennale with a provocative take on the traditional mosque.

Several public events planned including the official unveiling June 26th 10:00 AM Vanier Park.

VANCOUVER, CANADA - The Vancouver Biennale announces the first installation in its 2018-2020 exhibition. The organization that has brought some of the most memorable public art to the city will launch its fourth edition with "Paradise Has Many Gates", by Saudi Arabian artist Ajlan Gharem. The installation is designed in the architectural form of an Islamic mosque. What makes this mosque unusual, beyond its temporary location in Vanier Park, is that it's made out of chain-link fence, which is more commonly used to keep the unauthorized out or the imprisoned in. The mosque evokes multiple meanings and feelings; the generational divide between young and old, the designation of sacred space and its meaning within different cultures, the role of religious belief and our search for new knowledge and ways of living, the power struggle between religious constraint and democratic freedom.

"As we launch this new exhibition, with the theme re-IMAGE-n, we open with an artwork that's transparent, which invites exploration into sacred space," says Barrie Mowatt, President of the Vancouver Biennale. "In a time when we're witnessing dramatic political shifts towards nationalism and isolationism around the world, we need to re-explore our beliefs, our fears and our vision for a new interculturalism".

A series of collaborative events and activities are being organized around the artwork - with partners such as the Simon Fraser University's Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies, The Sisters Project, Voices of Muslim Women, and Indian Summer Festival.

Free Public Events

Tues June 26 10:00AM-1:00PM - Vanier Park

OFFICIAL UNVEILING OF PARADISE HAS MANY GATES + OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE 2018-2020 VANCOUVER BIENNALE - Artist in Attendance
Event for Press, Media, Partners, Friends

Witness the unveiling of Vancouver's newest outdoor community gathering space and inaugural installation of the 2018-2020 Vancouver Biennale, meet the artist, and participate in meaningful dialogue about sacred/public space, interculturalism, and other global and local issues. Welcoming remarks, scheduled press/artist interviews, and opportunity for open dialogue about the artwork.

Wed June 27 6:00-9:22 PM - Vanier Park

MULTICULTURAL DAY SUNSET PICNIC - Artist in Attendance
Free event - Open to the public

Join us at *Paradise Has Many Gates* in Vanier Park for a Sunset Picnic in celebration of Multiculturalism Day. Meet up with friends and neighbours to celebrate the incredible diversity of people and cultural organizations in our community. Bring a blanket and picnic and enjoy an evening of music, dance and fun in one of the most beautiful settings in the world.

Detailed information about these events and others planned throughout the summer is available through the Vancouver Biennale website at <https://www.vancouverbiennale.com/events/upcoming-events/>

About The Artist

Ajlan Gharem is a multidisciplinary artist who explores how Saudis articulate their culture. He is particularly interested in Saudi culture in a world of increasing globalization and constantly changing power dynamics. In a climate of rapid development across the Gulf and a cautious Saudi response, Ajlan's work focuses on the balance of power between the individual and the state and on his generation's ability to create change.

Ajlan received an undergraduate degree in Mathematics at King Khalid University and continues to apply this analytical training to his art. Born in the conservative southern city of Khamis Mushayt in Saudi Arabia, Ajlan is now based in Riyadh where he works as a teacher of Mathematics at Al Sahabah Public School. He is a co-founder of Gharem Studio along with his brother, the artist Abdunasser Gharem.

About The Vancouver Biennale

The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play, and transit.

Featuring internationally renowned and emerging contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines, the Vancouver Biennale exhibitions use great art as a catalyst for community engagement, learning and social action.

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