

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ahmed Alsoudani: Bitter Fruit
November 12, 2021 – May 1, 2022



Ahmed Alsoudani, in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, works in progress, 2021. Photo credit: Carlos Avendaño.

Philadelphia, PA, October 21, 2021 — The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is pleased to present *Ahmed Alsoudani: Bitter Fruit*, on view from November 12, 2021 through May 1, 2022. The culmination of the artist's two-year residency, the exhibition will debut a new body of sculptural works created in collaboration with FWM.

Known for his vibrant, expressionistic paintings that allude to both shared and specific lived experiences, including the sustained exposure to violence society endures, Alsoudani collaborated with The Fabric Workshop and Museum's team of studio artists to translate the organic forms from his drawings into an array of large-scale sculptures. Created between FWM and the artist's studio, and then hand painted by Alsoudani, these forms are placed throughout the gallery as though growing directly from the space itself.

"Alsoudani's interest in experimentation resulted in a project that is distinct from, yet related to, his paintings. We are thrilled to have collaborated with him on this new direction in his work," explains Fabric Workshop and Museum Executive Director Christina Vassallo.

Bitter Fruit centers around five imposing, outsized sculptures. Through these corporeal forms that are disquieting in their manifestation of trauma, yet captivating in their intrinsic humanity, Alsoudani processes his own experiences in a war-torn region marked by devastation and mass violence, evoking

the ways in which memories of widespread conflict can be internalized. The title of the exhibition is taken from Abel Meeropol's 1937 poem of the same name, first set to music as a protest song against lynchings and later recorded as the song "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday in 1939. Here, Alsoudani draws connections with the role that art can play for communities in protest while simultaneously communicating unbearable and horrible experiences.

"The taste of fruit becomes bitter when it experiences stress and drastic changes in conditions," says FWM Director of Exhibitions and Curator Karen Patterson. "This title—and this visual—poignantly help us understand the message Alsoudani is conveying about the ways in which our bodies are continuously processing and adjusting to our circumstances, and are forever changed as a result."

Ahmed Alsoudani: Bitter Fruit is curated by Karen Patterson, Director of Exhibitions and Curator.

About the Artist

Ahmed Alsoudani, who came to the U.S. from Baghdad, Iraq in the late-1990s, received his MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2008 and also holds a BFA from Maine College of Art. In 2011, he was one of five artists representing Iraq at the Venice Biennale, the country's first time hosting a pavilion in 35 years. The artist's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the Phoenix Museum of Art, and the Portland Museum of Art; recent institutional group exhibitions include *Chaos and Awe: Painting for the 21st Century* at the Frist Art Museum and the Chrysler Museum of Art. Alsoudani is represented by Marlborough Gallery in New York; a monograph titled *Cut of Time* was recently published in conjunction with his 2021 solo exhibition at the gallery. The artist lives and works in New York City.

About the Fabric Workshop and Museum

Founded in 1977, FWM both makes and presents artwork, encouraging artists to experiment with new materials and new media in a veritable living laboratory. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence (AIR) Program, FWM collaborates with artists to reveal new possibilities, documenting the course of artistic production from inspiration to realization. FWM presents large-scale exhibitions, installations, and performative work, utilizing innovative fiber and other media. Today, FWM is the only US institution devoted to creating work in textile and new media in collaboration with some of the most significant artists of our time.

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