

About Nabil Mousa

Born in Syria in 1966, Nabil Mousa emigrated to the United States with his conservative Christian family at the age of 12. After a career in business, in the 2000s he turned to the visual arts, particularly painting. This decision coincided with two important events, one public and one personal: first, the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. were a seminal moment in U.S. and global history. The fall of the twin towers ushered in an era of stigmatization and suspicion of people of Arab backgrounds, particularly in Western countries, as well as an on-going period of religious fundamentalism and intolerance. Second, when he decided to no longer live as a closeted gay man, Mousa came out to his family—resulting in his family rejecting him.

Much of Mousa's work reflects directly or indirectly on these personally significant events and have been springboards for his ongoing commitment to arts activism in the name of social justice. Paralleling these efforts, he has drawn upon his ability as a colorist and gestural abstractionist to investigate concepts of beauty, often inspired by Arab visual culture. He is currently based in Atlanta, Georgia, where his practice has expanded beyond painting to sculpture, printmaking, performance, and community engagement.

In recent years, Nabil Mousa's work has received national attention: in 2015, his sculpture *Paradise Built on the Bones of the Slaughtered*, was scheduled to be installed in the Grand Rapids City Hall in Michigan as part of esteemed ArtPrize® Seven International Art Competition. Mimicking the forms of the World Trade Center and strewn with burnt pages of the Torah, Bible, and Quran, the sculpture was never installed in fear of controversy. This action by the Grand Rapids city government received copious media coverage.

In 2017-18, Mousa installed his solo exhibition, *American Landscapes*, at the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. This series of paintings explored LGBTQ civil rights, including the struggle for gay marriage in the United States. Mousa's position as a gay, Arab-American artist resulted in front page coverage of *The New York Times* Sunday art section.

Nabil Mousa is currently working on a number of on-going projects including *Veil of Ignorance*, large-scaled mixed media work that reflects upon his disenfranchisement with religion; *Invisible Burka*, paintings, performances and installations that explores his struggles as a gay man; *Transcendence*, gestural abstract paintings based upon his interest in Tantric Buddhism; and *Birds Without Wings: Rhythm of Dance*, silkscreen prints reflecting upon the joys that the Syrian and Palestine people find in life and family, despite their sufferings.