

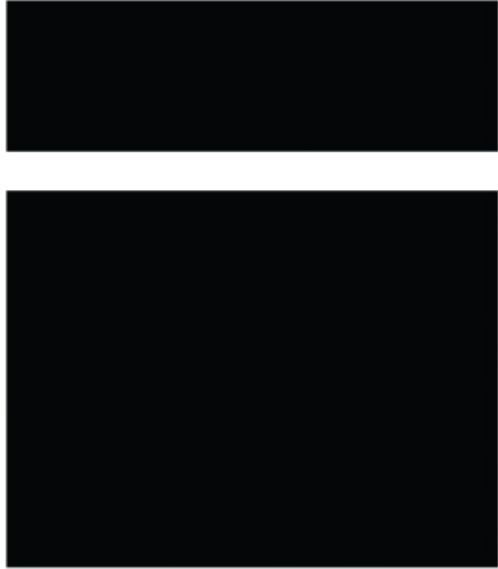




*Kaaba Picture As A Misprint 3*, 2014  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
137 x 110 cm

Hamra Abbas  
*Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*

26 April - 27 May 2014



*Kaaba Picture As A Misprint 1*, 2014  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
137 x 110 cm

## Religious Perfection and the Human Hand

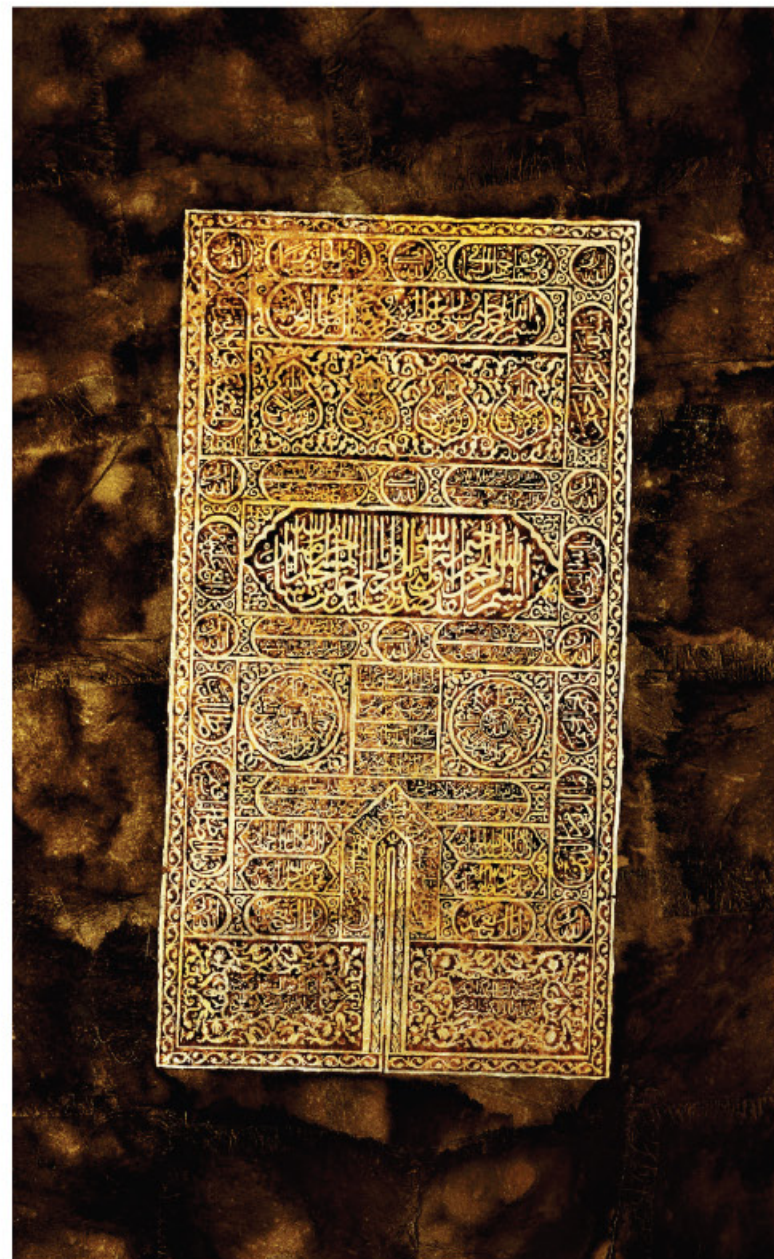
*Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*, explores human presence and intrusion superimposed upon the ideal of religious perfection. Using the Kaaba, the most sacred location in Islam, as the starting point for her inquiry, Abbas illuminates and manipulates the diversity of both religious understanding and involvement. She pushes the representation of spiritual icons to a point where their symbolic and religious significance is brought into question. Each object's representation is skewed by the artist and enhanced through the intimacy of physical observation. In most of her works, the presence of the human hand presents a rupture in the initial intended religious significance. Abbas distorts familiar images in order to question how they are perceived. The title of the exhibition, *Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*, itself implies a failure—a likeness of the Kaaba executed in error.

As established by previous bodies of work, Hamra Abbas' vision is vast—drawing from myriad sources to create her oeuvre. Unrestrained by subject matter or media, she allows herself to follow all lines of inquiry in order to create a diverse and holistic body of work. Previous series address cultural history, sexuality, violence, ornamentation, and faith. In her manner of embracing multiplicity, Hamra Abbas is visionary. She understands the process of human thought in that it assumes water-like qualities, ebbing and flowing. The scope of Abbas' vision explores subjects so close to human existence. Her practice embraces investigation, yet focuses on the meticulous. The exhibition *Kaaba Picture as a Misprint* uses the alternation of scale and medium to elucidate the correlation between public and private within the context of devotion. For source material Abbas looks to objects and pictures of religious value in her home country of Pakistan.

*Wall Hanging 1*, 2012  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
200 x 122 cm

*Wall Hanging 1* is a print of a painting of the silk and gold embroidered *kiswa* that covers the Kaaba door. This original image created by Abbas is a gouache painting on wasli paper informed by the miniaturist painting tradition. A plaster facsimile of the Kaaba's door displayed in Abbas' mother's home inspired this painting. The neglected cast hung askew on the wall, collecting dust over time. *Wall Hanging 1* explores translation between medium: embroidery to plaster cast, plaster cast to painting, painting to digital photograph, digital photograph to print. By removing the final art object from its religious origin and altering its initial material, the print challenges the retention of spiritual significance through multiple reinterpretations.

Abbas' painting exhibits painstaking detail. The style of miniaturist painting is defined by exhaustive attention to brushstroke; the implementation itself has a meditative quality in pursuit of idealized representation. The pitch of the image evokes human presence and absence concurrently. It is as if events have transpired around the wall hanging that lead to it being moved, yet the time to correct this misplacement has not been taken. This detail unearths interplay between perfection and imperfection. Does this replica retain spiritual resonance once divorced from its initial sanctified surroundings? Perhaps the human element in the work offers a more intimate representation of faith—one that is personal and defined by the individual. Ultimately, these questions are left open for the viewer, yet the transition of this object from a religious to art context implies that it is the aesthetic significance that is of the utmost importance.





*Kaaba Picture As A Misprint 6*, 2014  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
137 x 110 cm

*Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*, the namesake series for the exhibition, also explores how reorienting objects distorts how they are read. The works began by Abbas breaking down the iconic image of the Kaaba into its simplest, yet still recognizable form—two rectangles, one placed atop the other. On a page of wasli paper made by the artist, these two forms were printed in the darkest black ink. Commanding and monolithic, the images evoke the minimal modernist works of Tony Smith, Richard Serra, and Sol Lewitt. The scale allows for the image to be seen simultaneously as both monument and object. Using the language of minimalism we see a dialogue emerge between rational geometry and faith-based devotion. The original Kaaba picture can be interpreted as nothing more than the spatial relationship between two forms, or it may be the culmination of the shared Islamic experience of the Hajj. As is the case with all imagery in this exhibition, it is through personal association and memory that spiritual significance is attributed.

Through experimentation, these original Kaaba pictures evolved. Abbas broke down each black form into cyan, magenta, and yellow versions of the shape, which were then printed off center. Through this technique, only when the three colors are layered upon each other is the image black. It speaks to the different ways in which religion may be understood and experienced; how even when undergoing the same series of events, people may process these happenings in a plethora of ways. By deeming her method a misprint, the artist links the quest for truth and perfection through religious devotion to the capacity for human error. *Kaaba Picture as a Misprint* is not the monolithic minimalist image of the initial Kaaba picture, but instead it is a fractured, disorienting representation. Yet, within this splintered vision there is beauty.



*Kaaba Pictures 4*, 2013  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
109.9 x 109.7 cm

A different series entitled *Kaaba Pictures* also interprets the iconic image of the Kaaba. In a manner similar to *Wall Hanging 1*, this series explores how the alternation of scale and medium affects subject matter. The inspiration behind *Kaaba Pictures* is the images and objects that can be purchased during the Hajj pilgrimage. These souvenirs function as portable memory and commemorate this important event.

Each of the *Kaaba Pictures* begins as a painting on the scale of a postage stamp. The source images were selected with the intention of offering an assortment of moods, lending the Kaaba different distinct personalities and in some cases even taking on anthropomorphic qualities. Each painting is executed in a different style and color palette, ranging from abstract to more realistic. In exhibition, the original paintings are not shown and instead, large blown-up photographs of them are displayed. As a result the technique and medium used to create each work is transformed. The works begin to follow the format of the mass-produced images that inspired Abbas' original paintings. *Kaaba Pictures* evokes the personal distillation of an event experienced by many that is then returned to the public for consumption. The minutest details within the original paintings are amplified in a much larger scale—making imperfections visible and highlighting human error in representation. Much like the other works in the exhibition, this piece emphasizes the presence of the individual.





*The Piece Might Be Abstract,  
But its Made of Rubber and  
Looks Like The Male Organ, 2012*  
Stained-glass  
90 x 60 cm

*The piece might be abstract, but it is made of rubber and looks like the male organ continues the theme of implied religious significance. This light box made to mimic a stained glass window was inspired by Abbas' experience with Pakistani customs. On one occasion when sending by courier a work of art from Boston to Karachi, the piece was confiscated because of its perceived sexual resemblance. When an inquiry was made, the official responded back with an email, the text of which is used in this piece. The style of the piece might be abstract references windows found in churches and the phrase itself, written in gothic lettering upon a white scroll, appears as religious doctrine. The work follows the narrative of good versus evil that dominates sacred parable. Across religions, there is a code of right and wrong and abstraction leads to a confusing grey area. In the words of the Pakistani customs official the object may itself appear dubious, but nonetheless offends a moral code. The text is presented as a quote, which privileges the source of the statement, making the customs official a mouthpiece for moral rectitude.*



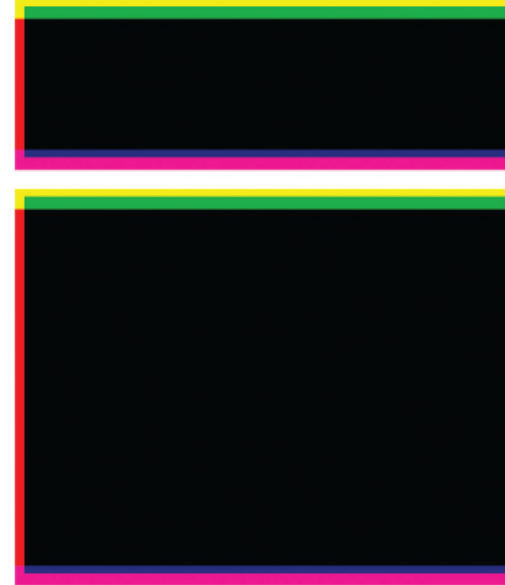
*Kaaba Picture As A Misprint 2*, 2014  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
137 x 110 cm

The gallery is spiritual space for the veneration of art, where the artist holds the position of creator. In this exhibition Abbas creates juxtaposition between not only the house of God and the person home, but also the residence of art. In her *Artists* series, Abbas looks at the canonized figures of contemporary art. These individuals have taken on a quasi-religious significance in the art world. Artists also continues the fluctuation of dimension occurring throughout the exhibition. She begins by working on an intimate scale—painstakingly sculpting the faces of famous artists. Each likeness is created in an effort to capture the iconic qualities of these artists. She focuses on capturing the individual's most essential features—for Louise Bourgeois it is her wry smile and Marina Abramovic, her piercing eyes. Abbas creates various models of each artist and selects only one to be photographed and printed on a larger-than-life scale. This allows for an act of translation between personal and public. The artist's fingerprints are expanded making the figures appear as if a giant created them. These works embrace the veneration of art stars. They are members of an elite pantheon of oft-referenced art world insiders. Over time these artists have been mythologized and have taken on an identity greater than that of mere mortals.

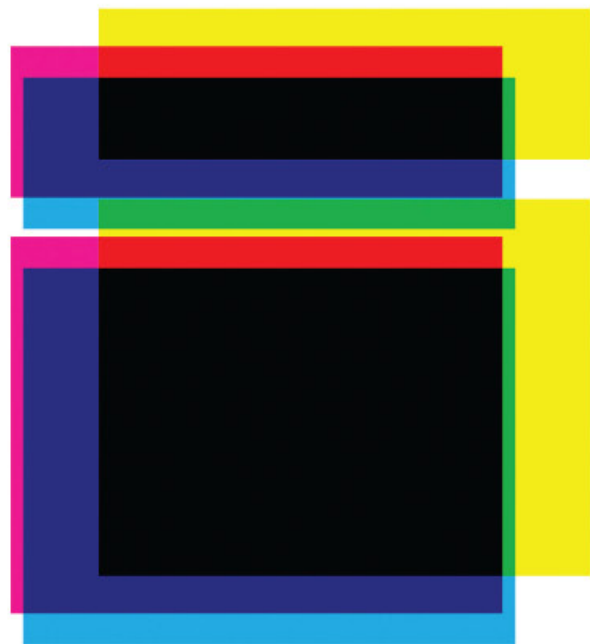
*Kaaba Picture as a Misprint* employs the visual language of religion to address transformation and individual experience. In this approach, the exhibition is about transcendence, about the ideas and ideals that are beyond medium and homogenized understanding. It is an invitation to a personal assignation of value and evocation of memory.

Justine Ludwig

*Justine Ludwig is an independent curator and writer as well as the Adjunct Curator at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, OH. Her curated exhibitions include Realms of Intimacy: Miniaturist Practice from Pakistan, Shilpa Gupta: A Bit Closer, Shinji Turner-Yamamoto: Disappearances, Francis Upritchard: A Long Wait, and Joey Versoza: Is This It. Ludwig is a graduate of Goldsmith's University of London and Colby College. Her research interests include borders, cross-cultural translation, and the aesthetics globalization.*







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*Kaaba Picture As A Misprint 5*, 2014  
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Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
137 x 110 cm



*Kaaba Pictures 3*, 2013  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
141.6 x 101.6 cm



*Kaaba Pictures 2*, 2013  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
141 x 94.9 cm



**Abramovic, 2014**  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
120 x 80 cm



**Beuys, 2014**  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
120 x 80 cm





**Bourgeois, 2014**  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
120 x 80 cm



**Close, 2014**  
Archival pigment print  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs  
120 x 80 cm

## Hamra Abbas

Born 1976, Kuwait

Lives and works between Boston and Lahore

### Education

- 2004 Meisterschueler, Universitaet der Kuenste, Berlin, Germany  
2002 MA, Visual Arts, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan  
1999 BFA, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2014 *Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE  
2013 *Hamra Abbas Wall Hanging I*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA, USA  
2012 *City and the Everyday*, PILOT, Istanbul, Turkey  
*Hamra Abbas*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India  
*Idols*, Canvas, Karachi, Pakistan  
2011 *Cities*, Green Cardamom, London, UK  
*Cityscapes*, OUTLET, Istanbul, Turkey  
2009 *Video Art by Hamra Abbas*, Babusch Project Space, Berlin, Germany  
2008 *Adventures of the Woman in Black*, Green Cardamom, London, UK  
*New works by Hamra Abbas*, NCA Gallery, Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
*God Grows on Trees*, Schultz Contemporary, Berlin, Germany  
*Hamra Abbas*, Zahoar-al-Akhlaq Gallery, NCA, Lahore, Pakistan  
2006 *Hamra Abbas*, Dorothea Konwiarz Stiftung Galerie, Berlin, Germany  
*Lessons on Love*, Rohtas 2, Lahore, Pakistan

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2013 *The 2013 deCordova Biennial*, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, MA, USA  
*Echoes: Islamic Art and Contemporary Artists*, Nelson-Atkins Art Museum, Kansas, USA  
*SIGNS TAKEN IN WONDER: Searching for Contemporary Istanbul*, MAK Vienna, Austria  
2012 *The Collectors Show: Chimera*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore  
2011 *Medi(t)ation - 2011 Asian Art Biennial*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan  
*Home Spun*, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India  
*Everyday Miracles (Extended)*, Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, California, USA  
*Sympathy for the Devil*, Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium  
*The Power of Doubt*, Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou, China and  
*PhotoEspagna 2011*, Museo Colecciones ICO, Madrid, Spain  
2010 *The Rising Tide: New Directions in Art from Pakistan 1990-2010*, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, Pakistan  
*UNERWARTET/UNEXPECTED*, Kunst Museum Bochum, Germany  
*ResembleReassemble*, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India  
*Beyond the Page: The Miniature as Attitude in Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, USA  
2009 *Aluminium*, 4th International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Baku, Azerbaijan  
*2nd International Incheon Woman Artists' Biennale*, S. Korea  
*Everyday Miracles (Extended)*, Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, California, USA  
*Everyday Miracles (Extended)*, REDCAT, Los Angeles, California, USA  
*Hanging Fire*, Asia Society Museum, NYC, New York, USA  
*Read*, Royal Ontario Museum, Canada  
*Mashaq*, Green Cardamom, London, UK  
2008 *Recently Seen and Admired*, Galerie Kunstagenten, Berlin, Germany  
*The Audience and the Eavesdropper: New Art From India and Pakistan*, Phillips de Pury & Company, London, UK  
*Drawn From Life*, Green Cardamom, London, UK  
*Buffaloes in Combat*, Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto, Canada  
*Farewell to Post-Colonialism*, 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China

- Crossroads*, Elementa Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE  
*In-Situ, Shake Before Use*, ARTIUM de Alava, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain  
2007 *Not Only Possible But Also Necessary-Optimism In The Age Of Global War*, 10th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul  
*Urban Myths and Modern Fables*, UTS Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
*Inaugural show*, National Art Gallery, Islamabad  
*Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, Thomas Erben, NYC  
*Politics of Fear*, Albion Gallery, London  
2006 *Zones of Contact*, 15th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia  
*Beyond the Page*, Asia House, London and Manchester Art Gallery, UK  
*Open day*, Vasil International Artists Workshop, Gadani, Pakistan  
2005 *Zeitsprünge Raumfolgen*, ifa Galerie, Berlin, Stuttgart, Germany  
*Full House*, Künstlerdorf Schöppingen, Schöppingen, Germany  
*Meisterschueler Prize Winners of UdK*, Galerie Michael Schultz, Berlin, Germany  
*KOVIDEO*, 1st Durban Video Festival, Mumbai, India  
*Beyond Borders*, Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, India  
2004 *Meisterschueler Prize Exhibition*, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK) Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
*Aarpaar 3*, Lahore/Karachi/Mumbai, Pakistan/India  
*Miniature from Pakistan*, Fukuoka Museum of Asian Art, Fukuoka, Japan  
*Open Studios*, Triangle Artists' Workshop, Brooklyn, NY, USA  
*8th Symposium Junge Kunst*, Guetersloh, Germany  
*FreiRäume. A Project by FreiStil eV*, Berlin, Germany  
*Love It or Leave It*, 5th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje, Montenegro  
*Creative Insecurity*, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Canada  
*Meisterschueler Exhibition*, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK) Berlin, Germany  
*Along the X-Axis: Digital Art From India and Pakistan*, New Delhi, India  
*Playing with a Loaded Gun*, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany  
2003 *Junger Westen 2003*, Kunsthalle Rechlinghausen, Rechlinghausen, Germany

### Residencies and Awards

- 2011 Abraaj Capital Art Prize Winner  
Artists-in-Residence, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston  
2010 Triangle Artist Residency, Brooklyn, NY  
2009 Jury Prize, Sharjah Biennial 9, Sharjah  
Jameel Prize Finalist, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK  
2006 Residencies at Gasworks, Victoria & Albert Museum and Green Cardamom, London, UK  
2005 Scholarship, Dorothea Konwiarz Stiftung, Berlin  
Residence scholarship, Künstlerdorf Schoeppingen, Schoeppingen  
2004 Meisterschueler Prize, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK) Berlin  
Triangle Artists' Workshop, Brooklyn, New York  
8th Symposium Junge Kunst, Guetersloh  
2003 Fellowship Award, artist-in-residence, Vermont Studio Center, USA  
DAAD Scholarship, Germany

### Public Collections

- Borusan Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey  
British Museum, London, UK  
Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India  
Kadist Collection, Paris, France  
Kiran Nader Museum of Art, New Delhi, India  
Koç Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey  
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA  
Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, USA  
USA Art In Embassies Collection  
Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium



*Kaaba Pictures* at the 2013 deCordova Biennial  
Photo by Stewart Clement  
Courtesy deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum





*Wall Hanging I* at Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum  
Photo by Stewart Clement  
Courtesy Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

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