

PRESS RELEASE



Rahraw Omarzad, *Gaining and Losing*, 2012, video stills, Courtesy the artist and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea

Castello di Rivoli is pleased to announce the arrival in Italy from Afghanistan of the artist and curator Rahraw Omarzad and his family thanks to the joint efforts of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Ministry of Culture and under the sponsorship of Castello di Rivoli.

The Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea announces the arrival in Italy today of Professor Abdul Wasi Rahraw Omarzad, artist, curator, writer and Professor at Kabul University, as well as the scholarship and artistic residency assigned to him with the aim of involving Omarzad in the Museum's exhibition, research and educational activities by encouraging encounters with artists and with the Turin and Italian intellectual community.

Castello di Rivoli has worked actively with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Ministry of Culture as a cultural sponsor so that the Omarzad family could arrive safely in our country by obtaining asylum. Together with Prof. Omarzad, his wife, the artist Manizh Nasrullah Omarzad, their daughters Worangha and Yousra Omarzad and his sister Maliha Salam will also arrive in Italy.

Rahraw Omarzad is an artist who uses photography and video to portray Afghan society; he was the founder and chief editor of *Gahnama-e-Hunar*, the only art magazine in the country, founded in 2000 together with his students, as well as founder of the non-profit art space CCAA Center for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan in Kabul in 2004, with exhibition spaces, an art school and an art library. Omarzad also promoted in 2006 the Women's Center for the Arts, an art school in which many of the young Afghan women artists known throughout the world were trained; in addition, he has had numerous international cultural relations over the last twenty years and is an active member of the IKT International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art.

Francesca Lavazza, Chairman of Castello di Rivoli, declares "The Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea reconfirms its role as a place for dialog, discussion and mediation, by hosting Rahraw Omarzad, editor, Professor and Director of the Center for Contemporary Arts in Kabul, the only center dedicated to contemporary art in Afghanistan. Professor Omarzad, with his experience and academic background, can only help us to enrich our knowledge of contemporary Afghan artistic culture."

"I had the pleasure of working with Prof. Omarzad in 2010-2012," says the Director of the Castello di Rivoli **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, "on the occasion of *DOCUMENTA (13)* in Kabul, the first international art exhibition in the country after the fall of the first Taliban regime (1996-2001). It was visited by 27,000 people; also in 2012 I exhibited his work *Gaining and Losing* in Kassel, which was seen by 905,000 visitors. In addition, Omarzad proposed many young artists from his CCAA to the workshops we organized in Kabul. Therefore, if he had remained in Afghanistan after the arrival of the Taliban in late August 2021, Omarzad would have been a particularly exposed person for various reasons including the fact that he had created a center for the development of contemporary artistic culture and a training school for women artists. After years of commitment to the development of the local artistic community, I believe it was important to help him and his family come to Italy. Contemporary art is made up of people who talk to our world and process traumas at the very moment they happen; it is therefore important to look after artists in conflict zones - it is our responsibility. With the arrival of Omarzad and his family in Italy, new cultural enrichments will begin. I am grateful to the Italian Government and in particular to the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the dedication and professionalism with which they accompanied and coordinated the process with precision, demonstrating an appreciation of the importance of art and culture in our contemporary world."

The **Accademia Albertina of Turin** also joined the sponsorship effort for the arrival in Italy of the Omarzad family, as part of their ongoing collaboration with the Castello di Rivoli, the **MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo** and the **Palazzo delle Esposizioni** in Rome also offered sponsorship.

The Museum thanks **Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary TBA21** as well as other individuals who prefer to remain anonymous and who supported this initiative through their generous contributions and donations, the first chapter of the new program dedicated to supporting Afghan contemporary culture in exile.

In the video *Gaining and Losing* (2012), a short story in four episodes layers past, present and future. Referring to the massive destruction of archaeological artifacts at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul over the past decade, and the reconstruction of Afghan cultural infrastructure over the 2000s, Omarzad plunges us into a troubled space of fear and desire, disappointment and anticipation, underlining the incongruous tension, suspension and calm during the precarious condition that was and is life in Afghanistan. The physical disability represented in the video symbolizes a country full of contradictions and potential and the country's cultural, economic, and political needs, as well as the simplistic perception that the West had and has of it.



Partner





Rahraw Omarzad
Photo Manizh Nasrullah

Biography

Rahraw Omarzad was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1964 where he lived until September 2021.

Omarzad is an artist, writer, Professor at Kabul University and founder of the CCAA Center for Contemporary Art Afghanistan in Kabul. The CCAA also includes an art school, Women's Center for the Arts, where many of the young contemporary Afghan women artists have been trained. Omarzad was also the founder and chief editor of the only Afghan art magazine, Gahnama and Hunar. He has organized art initiatives in Afghanistan and has participated in exhibitions including: *Young Kabul Art*, 18 June - 25 July 2006, Leonhardi Kulturprojecte, Frankfurt; *Piccoli giochi lungo la via della seta (un viaggio nell'arte da Istanbul alla Cina)*, 23-26 October 2008, Fortezza da Basso, Florence; *The Third One*, video installation, 7 February - 2 March 2009, Galleria Overfoto, Naples; *DOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel, 9 June - 16 September 2012, Kabul, 20 June - 19 July 2012; *Artists' Film International, 5th edition*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2014 (traveling to Fundación PROA, Buenos Aires).



Partner

