



Ahmed Umar (b. 1988, Sudan) is a cross-disciplinary artist living and working in Oslo. He received his MFA degree in medium and material-based art from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2016. Through his art, Umar has also been an important front figure for queer persons with Muslim backgrounds in Norway and Sudan.

Umar's artistic practice highlights questions regarding identity, religion, and cultural values through different modes of artistic expression. He uses personal experiences as tools to convey narratives not only about suppression and alienation, but also about liberation and owning one's own history. Umar works within a diverse range of medium: sculpture, textiles, ceramics, jewelry, photography, performance and more – and with materials and techniques that are as multi-faceted as the stories they relate.

His works have been exhibited at a number of institutions in Norway, and he was a participant in the 22nd Biennale of Sydney. Umar's works are in the permanent collections of the National Museum, Drammens Museum and City of Oslo Art Collection and more.

In 2023 Umar presented a large-scale solo exhibition, *Glowing Phalanges*, at Oslo's Kunstneres Hus and Bergen Kunsthall in Norway. He is also one of the four nominees for the renowned Lorck Schive Kunstpris in 2023 at Trondheim Kunstmuseum.

In 2024, he is participating in the 60th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.





OSL contemporary is delighted to present Sudanese-Norwegian artist Ahmed Umar at Art Basel 2024 in the Statements sector. As part of his ongoing series 'Forbidden Prayers' Umar will present a new body of works, each representing a prayer bead corresponding to a personal prayer. These unique sculptures will be intricately repurposed and transformed from found objects and materials the artist has collected over the years, typically souvenirs that have found their way to Norway from the African and Asian continents via tourism and missionary work. The consequence of this enterprise has contributed to the depletion of natural resources and the restriction of local craftspeople's creative freedom.

Umar painstakingly deconstructs and gives new life to these materials, meticulously refinishing every fragment and component by hand, before recreating them in whole new form. With a critical look at European stereotypes of African culture, he is materially and conceptually picking apart the constructed image of the "exotic" to breathe new life into the materials and implant within them with his own story. The resulting distinct objects can be described as politically strong and profoundly luscious and tactile.

Every sculpture is accompanied by a unique life-size acrylic cast of the artist's right hand in various gestures that reflect the movements used during prayer. As one of these new prayers, Umar will present a new ornate appliqué tapestry work that will cover the booth's ceiling perimeter, gently illuminating and diffusing the lighting from above.

The presentation will contain 15 unique pieces, the numbers following the traditional Islamic prayer counting system starting from 15, 33, 99. Umar's ultimate goal is to create a total of a thousand individual pieces, referencing the maximum number of prayer beads used in Sudanese Sufism.



Forbidden Prayers (work in progress)

2024

Series of 15 unique pieces

Mixed media

Various dimensions



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Ahmed Umar
Art|Basel 2024
Booth M17



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Appliqué on linen
Approx. 550 x 530 cm