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MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART TO INSTALL A COUNTER-MONUMENT BY BRITISH-BORN ARTIST AND UW- MADISON ART PROFESSOR FAISAL ABDU'ALLAH

Blu³eprint is MMoCA's
newest public art
installation

The sculpture will
be unveiled in the
coming weeks on
the corner of State
and Henry Streets,
in front of the
Museum.



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Faisal Abdu'Allah models for
Italy-based stone carver
Martin Foot as he works on
Blu³eprint at Quarra Stone
Company in Madison, WI

Photo courtesy of Jim
Escalante

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MADISON, WI—The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) will install a newly commissioned stone sculpture by Madison-based artist Faisal Abdu'Allah. The work, titled *Blu³eprint*, will be situated on State Street, just outside the Museum's lobby doors. Carved from Indiana limestone and measuring almost seven feet in height, the sculpture depicts Abdu'Allah seated in a Belmont barber's chair, a nod to the significance of the barbershop both within his artistic practice and his personal history. For Abdu'Allah, a trained barber, the barbershop reflects the Black experience as a place of physical renewal and social solidarity.

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The chair on which
Abdu'Allah sits in *Blu³eprint*
is modeled after a Belmont
barber chair.

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Faisal Abdu'Allah,
The Barber's Chair,
2017. Gold plating,
leather, aluminum,
cast iron, 49 x 55 x
25 inches.
Commissioned by
Autograph ABP.



By centering himself as the subject of *Blu³eprint*, he draws a parallel between the role of the artist and the barber, celebrating both as storytellers, cultural producers, and community builders.

Abdu'Allah selected the title to express the communal power associated with the Black salon. The "u" in "Blu³eprint" is to the power of 3, reflecting the three "u's" in the Zulu word "Ubuntu," an African concept referring to the interconnected nature of humanity. It communicates the idea that we are human only through the humanity of others, or, "I am because we are," said Abdu'Allah. This notion resonates strongly with the artist, who states that Ubuntu "stewards my understanding and governs my underlying principles of judgment and what matters."

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A computer operated robot did the initial fabrication on the monument at Quarra Stone.

Image Courtesy of
MMoCA



Abdu'Allah's pose may be familiar to some: It mirrors a sculpture that has been an enduring feature of Madison's public art landscape—*Abraham Lincoln* (1909), a bronze monument by Adolph Weinman at the top of University of Wisconsin's

Bascom Hill. In recent years, the monument has generated controversy among some UW students and other community members who argue that the monument should be removed due to President Lincoln's anti-immigrant policies and his belief, despite his opposition to slavery, in white racial superiority. Abdu'Allah conceived of *Blu³eprint* as a counter-monument to the Lincoln sculpture. "My philosophy is that artists have always been the shapers of social consciousness, and for me this piece illustrates that," Abdu'Allah said.

MMoCA commissioned *Blu³eprint*, which was fabricated by a team of experts at Quarra Stone Company in Madison. After computer-operated

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robots carved the monument, fine details were hand finished by noted carver and sculptor Martin Foot.

Blu³eprint is the prelude to Abdu'Allah's upcoming MMoCA exhibition titled *DARK MATTER*, which will open in September 2022. "The number of creative people and the amount of talent and commitment that coalesced to make *Blu³eprint* a reality is truly inspiring," said Leah Kolb, MMoCA Curator of Exhibitions. "Ultimately, monuments are about people. Like barbers who cut away the old to shape the new, this work suggests that when we work together to chip away at the past, a clearer image emerges—an image that reflects a broader and more expansive representation of humanity."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Faisal Abdu'Allah is an artist and a barber. He studied in London at the Royal College of Art. He is Professor of Printmaking and the Chazen Family Distinguished Chair in Art, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



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Photo courtesy of
Sharon Vanorny

Abdu'Allah has received numerous awards, including the 2012 Mayors prize for sustainability for his film *Double Pendulum*, Decibel Visual Artist Award, London,

First Prize at the Tallinn Print Triennial, Estonia, and is a 2016 recipient of The Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant Program for Painters and Sculptors.

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ABOUT MMoCA

The galleries at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art are always admission-free. Its vision is to be an organization that fosters the exchange of ideas and creates experiences that will inspire a wide audience; be a nexus for the work of emerging and established regional, national, and international artists; serve as a catalyst for the continued development of a vigorous community of artists; and provide a forum that will encourage people to be challenged by, reflect on, and make connections between art and the world around them.

The Museum includes four galleries and The Shop, a space to provide interactive contemporary art experiences and educational workshops to the community. The Museum's Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view which serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, dining, and cinema. Please visit mmoca.org to learn more.

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