

Graham Foundation

For Immediate Release

Michael Rakowitz

The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours

May 18, 2016–August 13 2016

Chicago, May, 2016—The Graham Foundation is pleased to present *The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours*, an exhibition by Michael Rakowitz. Concurrently displayed at the Graham Foundation’s historic Madlener House and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Rakowitz’s installation deploys fin de siècle Istanbul’s architectural remains as a counternarrative to the city’s rich multiethnic historical development, at the same time excavating psychic and material traces of the Armenian craftspeople responsible for much of the city’s art nouveau façades.

The exhibition’s title “The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours” refers to a customary Turkish saying used when an apprentice was given over to a master—meant to convey that the teacher was granted influence over their pupil. Such was the case with Kemal Cimbiz, a Turk who joined the atelier of Garabet Cezayirliyan, a member of the Armenian artisanal community. Under Cezayirliyan’s tutelage, Cimbiz began to create and cast molds in the tradition marked by late-nineteenth-century Istanbul’s once rapid modernization. To this day, the stone and plaster embellishments on buildings throughout Istanbul bear not only this storied legacy of craft, but also indelible impressions of the hands that built them, a haunting reminder of the traumatic histories that befell the city’s Armenian population.

Originating at a time of great cultural and historical flux, this moment of intense construction that shaped Istanbul’s built environment reveals a crucial blending of ideological currents—novel Western aesthetic influences with Turkish Ottoman architecture, and the indefatigable forces of modernization with the work of a generation of artisans. Accompanying these tensions were increasingly violent frictions between Turks and the nation’s Armenian and Greek minorities, which culminated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

For the exhibition, Rakowitz collaborated with former apprentices of Garabet Cezayirliyan, including Kemal Cimbiz, who now owns and operates Cezayirliyan’s atelier. As with many of Rakowitz’s projects, an engagement with questions of craft soon complicates our understanding of the historical forces acting against transmissions of skill and expertise, hinting at the maintenance of tradition as a form of resistance to cultural erasure. Facilitated by the fluid dissemination of knowledge and international inspiration once galvanized by Louis Sullivan’s quest for a new architectural language, Rakowitz claims a modernist lineage of ornamentation to evoke parallel narratives of activist preservation in both Istanbul and Chicago.

Presented in the Prairie Style Madlener House (1901–02), alongside the Graham’s collection of architectural fragments from significant Chicago buildings, the exhibition includes new plaster casts replicating original motifs found in Cezayirliyan’s atelier. Taken together with arrangements of animal bones and original architectural fragments from Istanbul and Chicago, *The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours* reveals a link between a much trumpeted aspect of Chicago’s history and the work of a lost generation of Armenian artisans, whose cross-cultural significance defined one of the twentieth century’s most tragic events.

The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours was originally developed for the 14th Istanbul Biennial, SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in 2015, and funded in part by the Graham Foundation.

May 18–August 13, 2016
Graham Foundation
4 W Burton Place, Chicago

May 19–August 13, 2016
Rhona Hoffman Gallery
118 North Peoria Street, Chicago

PARTICIPANT BIO

Michael Rakowitz is an Iraqi-American artist living and working in Chicago. He received his BFA in sculpture from Purchase College, SUNY, and his MS in visual studies from MIT. Rakowitz’s art practice operates at tense socio-political junctures, often exposing and challenging US–Middle Eastern cultural and political relations. In 1998, he initiated paraSITE, an ongoing project in which the artist custom builds inflatable shelters for homeless people that attach to the exterior outtake vents of a building’s heating, ventilation, or air-conditioning systems. His work has appeared in venues worldwide, including dOCUMENTA 13; PS1 Contemporary Art Center; the Museum of Modern Art; MassMoCA; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the 16th Sydney Biennial; and the 10th Istanbul Biennial, among others. He has had solo exhibitions at the Tate Modern in London, Lombard Freid Gallery in New York, Trafo Gallery in Budapest, and the Kunstraum Innsbruck. Rakowitz is the recipient of 2012 a Tiffany Foundation Award (2012); an Andy Warhol Foundation/Creative Capital Grant (2008); a Sharjah Biennial Jury Award (2007); a NYFA Fellowship Grant in architecture and environmental structures (2006); the Dena Foundation Award (2003); and the Design 21 Grand Prix from UNESCO (2002). He is professor in the Department of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University.

RELATED EVENTS

Wednesday, May 18, 6-8:30PM

Opening Reception & Talk by artist Michael Rakowitz

Thursday, June 30

“Absence and Transverse: Translations across Time, Space, and Medium in Istanbul”

Esra Akcan

Additional events will be announced throughout the run of the show. For more information about these and other upcoming events, visit: www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events.

ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations, and produces programming designed to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

The Graham Foundation was created by a bequest from Ernest R. Graham (1866-1936), a prominent Chicago architect and protégé of Daniel Burnham.

THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. G. Garden (1901–02) and renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now houses galleries, a bookshop, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts public programs.

BOOKSHOP

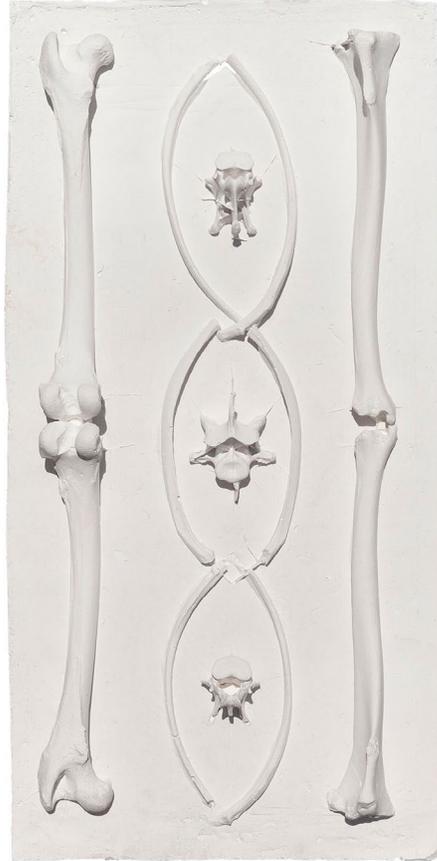
The Graham Foundation’s bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art, and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to the galleries and public programs is free and open to the public. Gallery and bookshop hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 AM–6 PM. Group tours are available by request.

ACCESSIBILITY

The second-floor galleries and third-floor ballroom where events are held are only accessible by stairs. The first-floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.



Images: View of Michael Rakowitz, "The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours," 2016, Graham Foundation, Chicago. Photos by: RCH | EKH.



Images (top) Michael Rakowitz, *The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours*, 2015. Installation view, Galata Greek Primary School, 14th Istanbul Biennial. Photos by Sahir Ugur Eren; (bottom) Michael Rakowitz, *The Flesh Is Yours, The Bones Are Ours*, 2016. Photo by the artist.

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High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Ellen Alderman for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.