

Press Release
15 January 2014

Mogadishu- Lost Moderns

7 March - 26 April 2014

Private View: Thursday 6 March, 6.30-8.30pm

Exhibition Open: Tues-Sat, 11am-6pm, FREE

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW



Images: Mogadishu (National Assembly) and Mogadishu (Shangani district), Andrew Cross, 2013

The Mosaic Rooms in London are pleased to present *Mogadishu - Lost Moderns*, the first exhibition to explore Mogadishu through its architecture and urban environment, narrating the story of Somalia's journey from traditional African nation via colonisation and post colonialism to emergent independent state. This trajectory may be familiar to Africa but its manifestations are not: how was Mogadishu created as a modern African capital?

Challenging familiar mainstream images that depict the city solely as a place of conflict and destruction, Somali-British architect Rashid Ali and British photographer Andrew Cross offer a unique account of what remains of the city's urban fabric and key modernist symbols after two decades of civil conflict. These specially commissioned photographs are presented alongside rare archival photographs, not yet presented to the public, which document the city's architecture under Italian colonial rule.

Examining this urban process the exhibition reflects on how under Italian colonial rule the former compact traditional Arab style city was transformed into a cosmopolitan modern African city at the beginning of the 20th Century. However it primarily focuses on the spatial developments that took place after independence, and in particular documents the new architectural symbols and city spaces that were a part of a wider social, political and economic strategy to articulate the newly claimed statehood.

"Mogadishu has in recent years become synonymous with violence, destruction and displacement, however, only two decades ago it was spatially, socially and culturally a very different city altogether"
(Rashid Ali)

Due to the destruction of much of its architecture, infrastructure and any historical archives associated with it, there has been an absence of any literature and discourse on the cultural development of Mogadishu through its architecture and built form. Rashid Ali and Andrew Cross' exceptional work, resulting from their trip to Mogadishu in the summer of 2013, provides a framework to better understand and explore this development.

"Being in Mogadishu, amongst these buildings and with the people who built them, I felt a palpable sense of the enduring qualities of architecture, not only physically but, also in the spirit of their original intent. Stripped to the bare essential elements of floors and walls, these buildings spoke clearly of the civic purpose for which they were built and the possibility of continuing with that purpose in the future." (Andrew Cross)

This timely exhibition offers a space for reflection on the value of civic architecture and heritage preservation. It also presents a unique perspective of a city in conflict, and an opportunity to promote new thinking on the broader discourse of urbanism in Africa and the Arab world.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of multidisciplinary events, which will focus on showcasing contemporary Somali culture and raising further discussion on the issues highlighted in the exhibition. See the full programme at www.mosaicrooms.org/talks-events

For further details, images and to arrange interviews contact Rosa Attwood at press@mosaicrooms.org or on + 44 207 370 9990.

Notes to Editors

- The artists Rashid Ali and Andrew Cross are available for interview.
- Rashid Ali was born in Hargeisa, Somalia and studied architecture at the Bartlett school, UCL and City Design and Social Science at the London School of Economics. He has been widely recognised for his architecture and research output, and has twice been short-listed for the prestigious Young Architect of the Year Award. He has been featured in international publications and his work has been exhibited at the Architecture Foundation, London Festival of Architecture amongst others. Ali is associate lecturer at the University of Liverpool School of Arts.
- Andrew Cross is well known for his photographic and film based explorations of structure and place. His video based works have achieved critical acclaim including being shortlisted for the 2004 Beck's Futures Prize. Cross is Associate Lecturer in Photography at Southampton Solent University and a visiting tutor in architecture and a number of UK Universities.
- Entry to the exhibition is free. The Mosaic Rooms are open from 11am-6pm Tuesday to Saturday.
- The Mosaic Rooms, a leading independent cultural space in west London, deliver a high quality, contemporary and progressive cultural programme from the Arab world and internationally. They are managed by the A.M. Qattan Foundation, a UK charity dedicated to the support of culture and education in Palestine and the Arab world. The Mosaic Rooms' programme is run by Rachael Jarvis, Head Curator. The Mosaic Rooms are part of the Foundation's Culture and Arts Programme.
- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell Road and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London, a short walk from Earl's Court Underground Station and Exhibition Centre. For further information about The Mosaic Rooms and the A.M. Qattan Foundation visit www.mosaicrooms.org.