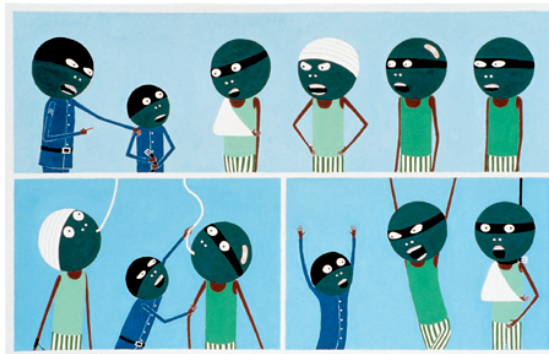


PRESS RELEASE

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The Williams College Museum of Art presents
Laylah Ali: The Greenheads Series

August 18–November 25, 2012



Photos available upon request.

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Williamstown, Mass. – The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is pleased to present *Laylah Ali: The Greenheads Series*. The exhibition will be on view from August 18 to November 25, 2012. It is the first time the *Greenheads* series—created between 1996 and 2005—will be shown as a comprehensive body of work. Over forty of these exquisitely rendered gouache paintings—from a total of more than eighty—have been gathered from collections here and abroad to chronicle the series' development.

The figures inhabiting Ali's works—the Greenheads—are enigmatic round-headed beings of indeterminate sex and race who inhabit a regimented, dystopian world where odd and menacing, though sometimes strangely humorous, encounters prevail.

The WCMA exhibition will allow viewers to examine the evolution of Ali's series. While the early paintings frequently focus on physically aggressive exchanges between groups of figures, these interactions are later replaced by individuals—alone or in small groups—who witness the prelude to, or aftermath of, a charged encounter. As the series continues, more and more of the figures' anatomy is pruned away, as if the artist is examining how much can be taken out—such as arms, feet, skin color—while still communicating thought, emotion, and social status.

Guest curator Deborah Rothschild writes, "Onto these timeless, genderless figures we can project a multitude of scenarios encompassing anything from schoolyard bullying to racial crimes from our national past and present, to tragedies issuing from modern war zones. The fact that we are often not certain who is perpetrator and who is victim, who is in power and who is powerless, keeps the viewer in an uneasy and active role as interpreter of these charged narrative works. Threaded through this body of work are elements of dark humor and references to popular culture. And the works are all the more unsettling because of their beauty as paintings."

In 2013, *Laylah Ali: The Greenheads Series* will travel to the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University.

About the Artist

Born in 1968 in Buffalo, NY, Laylah Ali has had numerous solo exhibitions at institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In 2006 she was named a USA Gund Fellow by United States Artists, which supports America's finest living artists. In 2004, her work was selected for the prestigious Whitney Biennial of American Art. She was featured in the award-winning PBS series *Art 21*. Ali received her B.A. from Williams College in 1991 and her M.F.A. from Washington University in St. Louis in 1994. She has also participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Ali is currently a Professor of Art at Williams College.

Related Programming

Gallery Talk

Tuesday, August 21 at 2:00 p.m.

Deborah Rothschild, Guest Curator and WCMA Senior Curator Emerita of Modern and Contemporary Art

Tour the exhibition with Dr. Rothschild, who will discuss Ali's painstaking working method, as well as her motivations as an artist, and consider the ways these compelling pictures, at once topical and timeless, invite viewer response.

Season Celebration

Friday, September 28 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a reception to celebrate WCMA's fall season of exhibitions.

Gallery Conversation: The *Greenheads* Series

Thursday, November 15 at 4:30 p.m.

Consider the *Greenheads* series from different perspectives in this gallery conversation with **Carol Ockman**, Dennis Meenan '54 Third Century Professor of Art; **Mark Reinhardt**, Class of 1956 Professor of American Civilization; and **David Smith**, John W. Chandler Professor of English.

The Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is located on Main Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The museum is wheelchair accessible and open to the public. Admission is FREE. For more information, contact the museum at (413) 597-2429 or visit wcma.williams.edu.

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