



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

MEDIA ALERT

February 6, 2025

MOCA PRESENTS THE U.S. PREMIERE OF WAEL SHAWKY'S *DRAMA 1882*

FEBRUARY 20 – MARCH 16, 2025

WAREHOUSE at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA



Wael Shawky, *Drama, 1882*, 2024 © Wael Shawky. Courtesy of Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Lisson Gallery, Lia Rumma, and Barakat Contemporary

LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) presents the U.S. premiere of Wael Shawky's critically-acclaimed film installation [Drama 1882](#), as part of Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs. On view from February 20

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through March 16, 2025 at WAREHOUSE at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, *Drama 1882* is a riveting moving image work that takes the form of an eight-part opera performed for the camera in a historic theater in Alexandria. Commissioned for the Egyptian Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale, *Drama 1882* reevaluates the implosion of a populist revolution, led by Colonel Ahmed Urabi, against European imperialist influence (1879-82). In the work, Shawky (b. 1971 Alexandria, Egypt) questions whether a cafe brawl between a local donkey owner and a Maltese man was happenstance (as history relates) or deliberately orchestrated by the British to warrant their subsequent bombardment, which in turn foreshadowed over seventy years of colonial occupation (1882-1956).

Written, scored, choreographed, and directed by Shawky and performed in classical Arabic, *Drama 1882* is a spectacular restaging of these historical events. Integrating handmade period costumes and expressionist sets, the work both disputes the veracity of historical truth and posits plausible counter-narratives. Emphasizing the futility of war while probing the implications of drama itself, *Drama 1882* conjures, in Shawky's words, "a sense of entertainment, of catastrophe, and our inherent doubt in history."

MOCA Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs Clara Kim states: "Wael Shawky is one of the most significant global artists today. He is a deft storyteller, who utilizes different techniques including marionette theater, music, film, and now opera to create singular and deeply engaging works that leaves audiences mesmerized. We are proud to bring his latest work *Drama 1882*—a clear standout at the 2024 Venice Biennale—to Los Angeles for our audiences to enjoy and be moved by."

"We are thrilled to present the U.S. premiere of Wael Shawky's *Drama 1882* as part of Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs," said Alex Sloane, Associate Curator. "Blurring the lines between film, performance, installation, painting, and sculpture, *Drama 1882* seamlessly integrates fact, speculation, and fiction to propose a revisionist history that reframes pivotal events and invites audiences into Shawky's world. For more than three decades, Shawky has reimagined and reinterpreted accepted accounts of Arab culture and history with meticulously researched artworks, and we can't wait to share this important installation with MOCA's audience."

In addition to the film installation, MOCA will host a [conversation](#) between Shawky and Sloane on February 22 from 3pm-4pm at WAREHOUSE at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA.

[Wael Shawky: Drama 1882](#)

February 20 – March 16, 2025

WAREHOUSE at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA

Presented as part of Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs

[Free](#), advance registration recommended.

CREDITS

Drama 1882, Production Credits

Written, directed, and original score: Wael Shawky

Film Executive Producer: Mark Lotfy

Theater Executive Producer: Osama Al-Hawary

Film Executive Director: Abanoub Nabil

Theater Executive Director: Ahmed Shawky

Director of Photography: Mina Nabil

Historical Writing & Proofreading: Islam Salama

Choreography supervisor and training: Mirette Mechail

Editor: Mark Lotfy

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Theater Assistant Director: Mohamed Farouq Rocky
Musical Arrangement: Mohammed Hosny
Vocal Supervisor: Mohammed Khaled
Recording, Mixing and Sound Design: Michael Fawzy
Costumes Supervisor: Nahla Morsy
Scenography Supervisor: Osama Gaber
Production Implementation: Ahmed Sayed

Wael Shawky: Drama 1882, is presented at MOCA as part of Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs.

Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs is organized by Alex Sloane, Associate Curator, and is produced by Amelia Charter, Producer of Performance and Programs with Michele Huizar, Performance Coordinator, The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles.

Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs is founded by Wonmi & Kihong Kwon and Family.

Wael Shawky: Drama 1882, is organized by Alex Sloane, Associate Curator with Clara Kim, Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs.

SUPPORT

Major support is provided by the MOCA Global Council.

Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions with major funding provided by Tatiana Botton and Jordan S. Goodman + The Goodman Family Foundation. Generous funding is provided by Michael and Zelene Fowler, The Earl and Shirley Greif Foundation, Jonathan Segal, the Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation, and Pamela West.

Performances at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Performance with generous funding provided by Betsy Greenberg and The Lenore S. and Bernard A. Greenberg Fund.

General admission to MOCA is free courtesy of Carolyn Clark Powers.

Wael Shawky was born in Alexandria in 1971 where he lives and works. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Pompeii Archaeological Park, Pompeii, Italy (2023); M Leuven Museum, Brussels, Belgium (2022); The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX, USA (2021); The Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2020); ARoS, Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark (2018); Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, China (2017); Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy (2016); Fondazione Merz, Turin, Italy (2016); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2016); Fondazione Merz, Zurich, Switzerland (2016); MATHAF, Doha, Qatar (2015); MoMA PS1, New York, NY, USA (2015); K20 Düsseldorf, Germany (2014-15); Serpentine Galleries, London, UK (2013-14); KW Contemporary Art Institute, Berlin, Germany (2012); Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2011); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (2011); Delfina Foundation, London, UK (2011) and Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy (2010). He has represented Egypt at La Biennale Di Venezia 2024; participated in the 14th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (2015); the 11th Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2013); Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012); the 9th Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (2012); SITE Santa Fe Biennial, NM, USA (2008); the 9th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (2005); and the 50th Venice Biennale, Italy (2003). Recent awards include the inaugural Mario Merz Prize (2015); the Award for Filmic Oeuvre created by Louis Vuitton and Kino der Kunst (2013); the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2012); the Schering Foundation Art Award

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(2011), as well as The International Commissioning Grant and an award from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, in 2005. In 2010, Shawky founded the educational space MASS Alexandria.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART (MOCA) Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth; a world-class collection of nearly 8,000 objects, international in scope with deep holdings in Los Angeles art; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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