

جامعة نيويورك أبوظبي



NYU | ABU DHABI

معروض الفنون  
NYUAD  
ARTGALLERY

**NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery Exhibition “Slavs and Tatars: *Mirrors for Princes*”  
Closes May 30 Following Three Months of Steady Visitor Attendance  
As the First Solo Exhibition In The Gallery’s Inaugural Year**

**Exhibition Prepares to Travel for its Next Transformation at IMA Brisbane  
Before continuing to the Blaffer Art Museum in Texas**



Installation view of Slavs and Tatars: *Mirrors for Princes* at NYUAD Art Gallery.  
Photo: Fares Jammal/Shadow Professional Photography.

**Abu Dhabi, May 21, 2015:** The major solo exhibition of the art collective **Slavs and Tatars**, titled ***Mirrors for Princes***, on view through May 30, 2015 at **New York University Abu Dhabi Art Gallery (NYUAD Art Gallery)**, continues to engage visitors with its interactive spaces and creative programming. The exhibition is Slavs and Tatars’ most ambitious, immersive installation to date, with new work occupying the 7,000-square-foot exhibition space at NYUAD Art Gallery.

The Gallery Director and curator of this exhibition, Maya Allison, describes the reception of audiences from the UAE and from abroad. She comments “I was struck by the ‘bi-cultural’ legibility of Slavs and Tatars references, but also how far the nuance shifts as a result. A single piece, like *Sheikha* (pictured above at left) contains references to 1950s America, a Cairo Mosque, and female leadership more generally. Which motif the visitor reads first – or at all – will differ depending on their cultural framework. Abu Dhabi audiences have a remarkably international visual literacy.”

With this exhibition, NYUAD Art Gallery engaged visitors from the University, as well as local and international communities through tours, workshops, and the artists’ residency at the NYU Abu Dhabi campus in March. Hundreds of local university and high school students have participated in interactive

tours and Q & A sessions. During the artists' residency on campus, members of Slavs and Tatars attended classes and lectures, integrating with the faculty and students, while simultaneously maintaining a rigorous itinerary of travel and research throughout the region. The Art Gallery has hosted groups from international foundations and museums including the Sharjah Art Foundation, the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation, and the Mori Art Museum. An interactive family art day with a child-friendly tour and thematic workshops generated overwhelming interest and positive response.

The "Tea House," the third and final room of the exhibition, became a popular destination for students, academics, and artists to gather, read, and exchange ideas throughout the run of the exhibition. Every detail of the room, from the wall colors, to the furniture, fabrics, and lighting was specifically designed by Slavs and Tatars, including the curated selection of books that explore the themes of the exhibition. The books range from ethnographies to studies of grooming to volumes of advice for royalty, the "mirrors for princes" from which the exhibition takes its name. The Tea House was created as a space for rest and contemplation, but has metamorphosed into a gathering place for the community at large.



The Tea House. Slavs and Tatars: Mirrors for Princes at NYUAD Art Gallery.  
Photo: Fares Jammal/Shadow Professional Photography.

### **About *Mirrors for Princes***

The exhibition and its accompanying book trace the current obsession with self-help to a medieval genre of political science, "mirrors for princes," shared among Christian and Muslim lands, with Machiavelli's *The Prince* being the most famous example. At NYUAD Art Gallery the artists look to these texts as an urgent precedent of generosity and critique, and as a case study of the balance between faith and state, issues that continue to resonate today across the Middle East, North America and Europe.

In the exhibition, visitors traverse three environments, each radically different from the last. The first is a five-channel audio installation in which a series of mirrored speakers arranged on traditional book stands play excerpts from an 11th-century, Turkic "mirror for prince" called *Kutadgu Bilig* (*Wisdom of Royal Glory*) in five languages (Turkish, Uighur, Polish, German, and Arabic). Next, a dark, psychedelic gallery holds a series of glowing, fetishistic sculptures that explore the text's concern with grooming, both one's hair as well as one's heart and one's tongue. Finally, visitors discover the serene teahouse and reading room, where the books available are curated by the artists from the NYU Abu Dhabi library

collection, and merge with their art practice.

In conjunction with the exhibition a book published by JRPIRingier, also titled *Mirrors for Princes*, has been commissioned by NYUAD Art Gallery and edited by Anthony Downey of *Ibraaz*. A hybrid of scholarly research and original artworks, the book features essays specially commissioned on the research topic, as well as an interview with the artists by Downey and Beatrix Ruf. The book is now available [here](#).

### **About Slavs and Tatars**

Slavs and Tatars, formed in 2006, is an art collective that describes itself as “a faction of polemics and intimacies devoted to an area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia.” The collective’s work spans several media, disciplines, and a broad spectrum of cultural registers (high and low.) They are best known for their use of a playful presentation style to disarm and engage viewers in the content of the research underlying their work. Their publications and art installations explore relationships among countries, visual cultures, and histories. In 2014, their work was presented in five solo exhibitions at major international venues. Notable exhibitions include solo shows at MoMA in New York, Kunsthalle Zurich, Vienna Secession, and Dallas Museum of Art, as well as inclusion in the *The Ungovernables* (New Museum Triennial), and the 10<sup>th</sup> Sharjah Biennial.

### **Exhibition Cycle Travel Dates**

**Slavs and Tatars: *Mirrors for Princes*** is a series of unique installations drawn from their research. The cycle manifests at five different venues, each with different curators. These include: Kunsthalle Zurich (August 30 – November 9, 2014); NYUAD Art Gallery (February 28 – May 30, 2015); Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane, Australia (October 24 – December 19, 2015); Blaffer Museum of Art, Houston, Texas (January 16 – March 19, 2016); and the Museum der bildenden Künste (MDBK), Leipzig, Germany (November 15, 2016 – March 3, 2017).

### **About NYUAD Art Gallery**

The Art Gallery is located at the main entrance to NYUAD’s Saadiyat Island Campus and presents curated exhibitions of art and material culture across historical and contemporary topics, with a special emphasis on subjects of both regional concern and international significance. Through focused exhibitions, events, and publications, the gallery serves as a catalyst and locus of intellectual and creative activity, linking the University with the Abu Dhabi public and a worldwide community of artists, curators, and scholars.

The 664-square-meter (7,000-square-foot) exhibition space features soaring double-height ceilings and an outdoor installation space. It is fully equipped for exhibitions in all media, with custom walls and lighting allowing for experimental and traditional installations, from video art to ancient works.

The curatorial platform supports scholarly and experimental installations, artists’ projects, guest curators, and landmark exhibitions. The current exhibition program centers on three themes: landscape and the built environment, Islamic art and culture, and art in global dialogue.

The NYUAD Art Gallery hours are Monday to Thursday, 11am–5pm, and Saturday, 2pm–5pm. To contact the gallery, call +971-2-628-8000, or visit the website: [www.nyuad-artgallery.org](http://www.nyuad-artgallery.org).

### **About NYU Abu Dhabi**

NYU Abu Dhabi consists of a highly selective liberal arts and science college (including engineering), and a world center for advanced research and scholarship — all fully integrated with each other and

connected to NYU in New York. Together, NYU New York, NYU Abu Dhabi, and NYU Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global network university, with faculty and students from each campus spending "semesters away" at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents. NYU Abu Dhabi graduated its first class in spring of 2014. It is attended by a diverse student body representing over 100 countries.

Join the conversation on Facebook (NYUAD Art Gallery), Twitter (@NYUADArtGallery), and Instagram (@NYUADArtGallery) and use the hashtags #SlavsandTatars and #MirrorsforPrinces when posting.

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