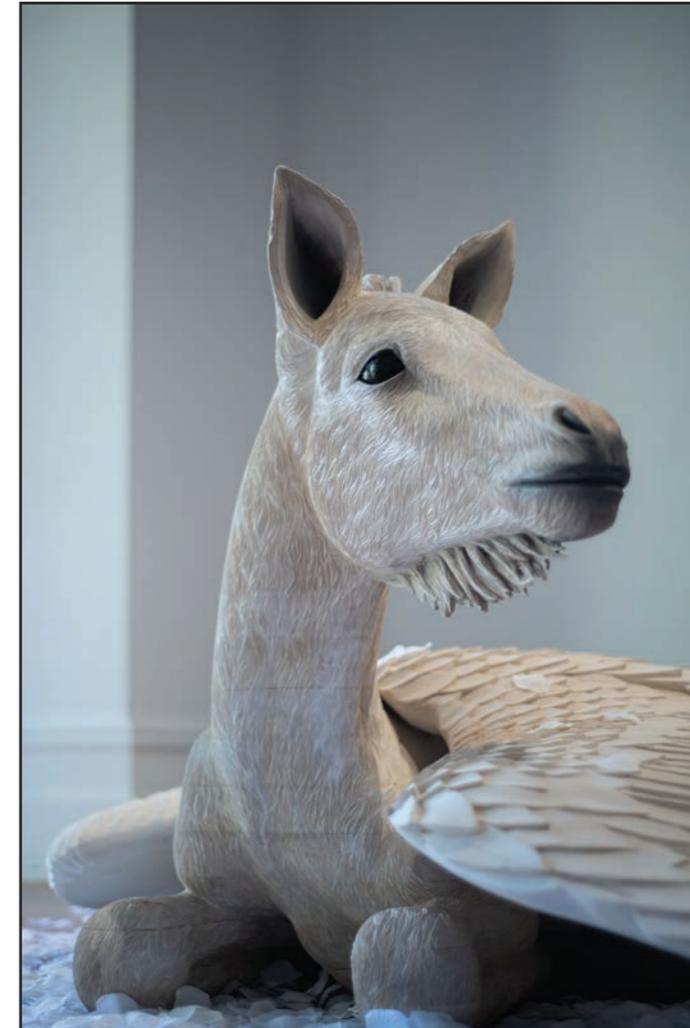


# ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH

## *JOURNEYS*





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IMAGES > [Front cover] Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Practical Magic*, 2016, carved wood and synthetic rope, dimensions variable. The University of Western Australia Art Collection. Image courtesy of the artist.

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IMAGE > Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Buraq* [installation detail], 2020, painted wood, 80 x 110 x 230cm. Collection of the Murdoch University. Photograph: Liam James.

# JOURNEYS

## By Bahar Sayed

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A tattoo is a sign. A drink in hand – alcoholic – is a definitive. A cigarette isn't the clue you think it is, neither is a headscarf.

I'm trying to discern how much we share. I know a question would much easily reveal the answers, but I am aware that as much as we are what we assert, we are also the tensions caused by our unresolve. I'm shy to ask, allowing us both some privacy.

The aim is to avoid traversing the community gossip channels, stories shared over the cusps of clear tea glasses or Whatsapp text messages sent by the made-easy forwarding feature. Perhaps, this stretch is even the threat. What I am really expressing is not a fear of being outcast, but a fear of being astray.

It's a balance between trust and suspicion and I should probably switch my Instagram to private.

Let me commit the only thing I believe to be true; there is but One God and Prophet Muhammad is God's Messenger. This vital belief is the foundation of the Islamic community, the ummah, who aim to organise themselves around the revelations of God's Word. Despite our unifying devotions, this is where the divisions begin.

Collected against the politics of separation, Abdul-Rahman is preoccupied with the spectrum of possibility. He materialises story and myth, uninterested in ruining what is beautiful with the limitations of what could be true. In creating unexpected encounters



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IMAGE > Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *I am your treasure* [installation detail], 2023, stained wood, Mabe pearl, lighting, 100 x 70 x 70cm (snake). Photograph: Liam James.



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IMAGE > Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Practical Magic* [installation detail], 2016, carved wood and synthetic rope, dimensions variable. The University of Western Australia Art Collection. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Liam James.

with the natural world, Abdul-Rahman's treatment of material evokes awe in the familiar. In manipulating the real, Abdul-Rahman's sculptural work suspends our disbelief, trying for a possibility to grasp the unreal.

While the Unseen sits beyond our human comprehension, God revealed Their Word through the poetics and allegory of the Qur'an. In our attempts for Holy alignment, Muslims have sought to understand and actualise the meanings of this sacred text. There are directions shared with clarity, teachings told through metaphor, and verses which abrogate one another. Yet, taken word for word, the Qur'an reads with inconsistency and contradiction.

To settle matters of faith, the Prophet was relied upon as guidance for the righteous path. After his death, the ummah found an overwhelming pressure to interpret every nuance of the Qur'an. Different interpretations have developed over time in various streams of theology, philosophy,

mysticism, ethics and law. As subsequent generations of Muslims sought to understand God's Will in relation to their own context, the interpretations of the Qur'an became increasingly diverse, as it was applied in different ways from society to society.

Some fourteen hundred years later, Abdul-Rahman skilfully carves his devotion upon what can be seen. Undisturbed by contradictions nor overwhelmed by the multiplicity of meanings, he projects his subjectivities onto perceptions of reality. Abdul-Rahman suggests the expanse of what he believes through offerings of personal memory, cultural histories, and religious tales. Unconcerned by these tensions, his stretch of faith is parallel to a confidence in Universality. For what is a Muslim, if not a believer. Or, clearer yet, as Ice Cube states "I'm a natural Muslim."

We connect symbols to stories to link to One and another. Resemblance guides our interpretations. It makes possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, by organising

our symbols and controlling the stories which represent them.

God's Hands; resemble to our own  
His Throne; for fathers authority  
Paradise; temptations released.

We align what lies beyond with what lies besides.  
This is either with confidence or apprehension for  
what we could not possibly know.

Inspired by his mother, Abdul-Rahman shares  
that faith can only flourish when the world is  
understood on the most practical level. Faith in  
self,

timing,  
journey.

To know is to have access to a certain kind of  
fact. To believe is to propose something with a  
probability of truth. Propelled by the tensions  
of the two, faith is asserted between what is  
possible and what is conceivable. While Abdul-  
Rahman does not claim his beliefs as fact nor  
force a rigid politic, he admits to his faith through  
the possibility of captivating Beauty. Through  
sculpture, Abdul-Rahman creates passage from  
belief to encounter, suggesting a memory, altered;  
an enigma, interpreted; a faith, practising.

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IMAGE > Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *I am your treasure* [installation view], 2023, stained wood, Mabe pearl, lighting, 100 x 70 x 70cm (snake). Photograph: Liam James.



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IMAGE > Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Buraq* [installation detail], 2020, painted wood, 80 x 110 x 230cm. Collection of the Murdoch University. Photograph: Liam James.



IMAGE > Portrait of Abdul-Rahman Abdullah. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Bo Wong.

## ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH

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Abdul-Rahman Abdullah (b. 1977) is an artist living and working on Wadjuk Nyungar country, in the Peel region of Western Australia. Working primarily in sculpture and installation, he explores the intersections of identity, culture and the natural world. Living and working in a rural environment, his practice offers an alternative perspective across disparate communities.

Since graduating from Curtin university in 2012, Abdul-Rahman has exhibited widely around Australia, including WA Focus 2015 (AGWA), Adelaide Biennial 2016 and 2022 (AGSA), The National 2019 (MCA) and Tarrawarra Biennial 2023. His work is held in public, corporate, university and private collections. In recent years he has been active as a board member for PICA, Arts

advisor for City of Perth, state, national and regional peer assessor and set designer for Marrugeku. He is currently undertaking a fellowship with Regional Arts Western Australia.

<https://abduhrahmanabdullah.com/home.html>

# LIST OF WORKS

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Abdul-Rahman Abdullah  
*Practical Magic*  
 2016  
 carved wood and synthetic rope  
 dimensions variable  
 The University of Western Australia art collection

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah  
*Buraq*  
 2020  
 painted wood,  
 80 x 110 x 230 cm  
 The Murdoch University collection

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah  
*I am your treasure*  
 2023  
 stained wood, Mabe pearl, lighting  
 100 x 70 x 70 cm



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