

# EXHIBITION GUIDE

**Farwa Moledina**

*Women of Paradise*

9 September — 13 November 2022

Tower Room, Second Floor

فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ(ص) أَفْضَلُ نِسَاءِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ أُرْبَعَ حَدِيجَةُ بْنَتُ حُوَيْلِدٍ وَ فَاطِمَةُ بْنَتُ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ بِنْتُ عِمْرَانَ وَ آسِيَّةُ بْنَتُ مُرَاحِمَ امْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ.

*The prophet is narrated to have said “The best of the women of paradise are Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, Fatimah bint Muhammad, Maryam bint Imran and Aasiyah bint Muzahim, the wife of Pharaoh”*

**Source:** Kitab al-Khisal, vol. 1 pg 206

Sunan Nasai, vol. 5 pg. 93 hadith 8355

This new work by Birmingham-based artist [Farwa Moledina](#) is a study of the four women promised paradise in Islamic tradition. One of these is Maryam (a.s.)\*, mother of Isa (a.s.), otherwise known as Mary, mother of Jesus.

*Women of Paradise* (2022) is a response to the singular religious narratives that dominate museums and galleries. Built on principles of neutrality, these spaces rarely contain depictions of Mary outside of the Christian imagination. Moledina’s work interrogates this assumption of neutrality by providing a different perspective on this figure. In the work, Maryam (a.s.) – a subject of equal cultural significance in the East – is presented alongside three female figures largely unfamiliar to the Western world. These are Aasiyah (a.s.), Khadijah (a.s.) and Fatimah (a.s.).

Moledina’s work comprises four wooden frames hinged together around digitally printed textile and embroidery. The arched frames resemble a *mihrab* – a niche found in the walls of mosques that indicates the direction of prayer. The textiles and embroidery are composed of patterns related to the women and inspired by principles of Islamic design such as recurrence, symmetry and abstraction.

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Please note the Tower Room is only accessible via a number  
a of steps.



### **1. Aasiyah bint Muzahim (a.s.) (Aasiyah, daughter of Muzahim)**

According to Islamic tradition, Aasiyah bint Muzahim (a.s.) was the wife of Fir'awn (Pharaoh of the Exodus) and adoptive mother of Prophet Musa (Moses) (a.s.).

Musa (a.s.) was found by Aasiyah (a.s.) in a basket on the Nile (Quran 28:7). Despite the prevalence of infanticide at the time, she managed to convince the Pharaoh to let him live as their adopted son. (Quran 28:9)

She rebelled against her husband's notion that he was a god amongst people. Having discovered her belief in Musa's prophecy, the Pharaoh tortured Aasiyah (a.s.) to death. (Quran 66:11)



### **2. Maryam bint Imran (a.s.) (Maryam, daughter of Imran)**

Maryam bint Imran (Mary) (a.s.) was the mother of Isa (Jesus) (a.s.). She is mentioned in the Quran, alongside Aasiyah (a.s.) as one of the most righteous women in the Islamic religion.

Although Isa (a.s.) was born as a result of a virgin birth, he is not considered to be divine. Due to her patience, strength and *tawakkul* (trust in God), Maryam (a.s.) was chosen above all women:

*And when the angels said, "O Maryam, indeed Allāh has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds. (Quran 3:42)*



### **3. Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (a.s.) (Khadijah, daughter of Khuwaylid)**

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (a.s.) was the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)\*\*, and is a shining example of strength, faith and independence. She is often referred to as *Umm al-Mo'mineen* (Mother of the Believers).

Khadijah was a merchant woman and Muhammad (s.a.w.) was one of her agents. On noticing his trustworthiness, Khadijah (a.s.) proposed marriage to him.

When the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) reported his first revelation, Khadijah (a.s.) was the first to convert to Islam and believe in his message. Khadijah's support was essential to the spreading of Islam, not only did she offer him emotional support; she also financially supported him with the funds from her trading endeavours.



#### **4. Fatimah bint Muhammad (a.s.) (Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad)**

Fatimah bint Muhammad (a.s.) was the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) and Khadijah (a.s.). She is often referred to as *az-Zahra* (The Radiant).

Fatimah (a.s.) and her husband Ali (a.s.) were two of the greatest followers and supporters of the Prophet. After the death of her mother Khadijah, she looked after her father Muhammad (s.a.w.) so devoutly that he used to call her *Um Abiha* (Mother of her father). She passed away shortly after the death of her father, the Prophet.

Fatimah (a.s.) resembled her parents in her faith and generosity. She was known for her humility and her kindness to the needy.

*\*(a.s.) is an abbreviation of the Arabic term alayhis salaam, meaning “peace be upon him/her”. It is used when mentioning the name of a religious figure as a sign of respect.*

*\*(s.a.w.) is an abbreviation of the Arabic term sallallahu alayhi wa alihi wasallam meaning “peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny” and is used specifically upon mentioning the name of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).*

#### **About the artist**

Farwa Moledina's work is often a study of female Muslim identity. She is interested in how the western historical art narrative portrays the Muslim woman, and whether this has impacted ways in which Muslim women are viewed in the contemporary world. The multi-layered compositions within *Women of Paradise* invite viewers to examine preconceived notions of Muslim women and Islamic tradition.

This work is dedicated to the memory of Farwa Moledina's late aunt Fatima, who passed away in April 2022 and was named for one of the four women of paradise. She was Farwa's foremost mentor and actively fostered her creativity from a young age.



# LIMITED EDITION PRINTS

Moledina's exhibition is accompanied by limited edition prints of each individual *Women of Paradise*. Aasiyah (a.s.) / Maryam (a.s.) / Khadijah (a.s.) / Fatimah (a.s.), Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl, £100, edition of 10. In addition, a limited edition print is available of the four *Women of Paradise*. Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl, £150, edition of 10.

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