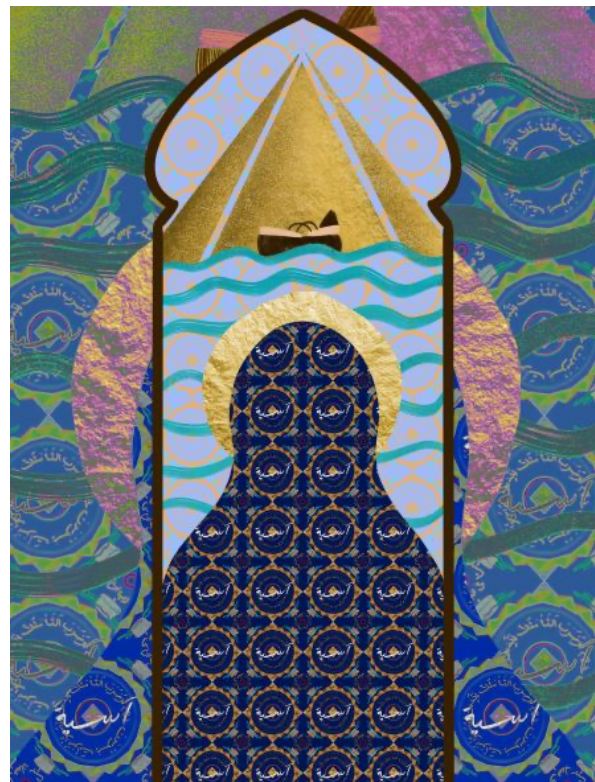
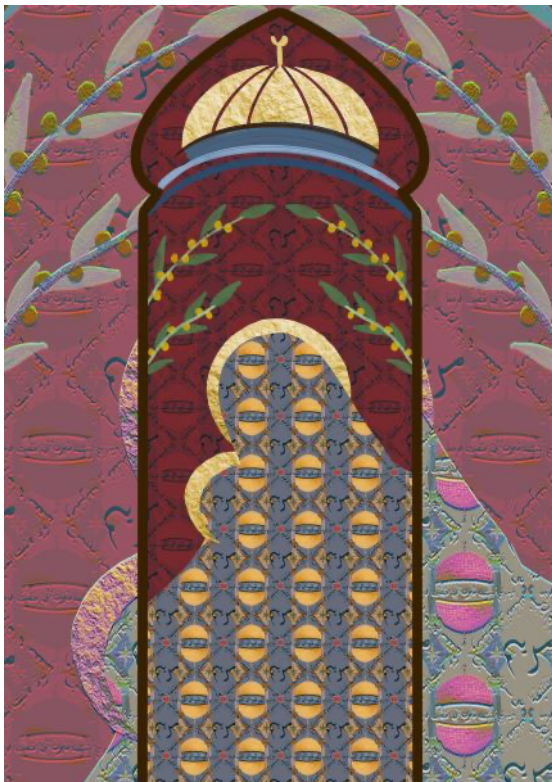


Farwa Moledina *Women of Paradise* 9 September – 13 November 2022



Left: Farwa Moledina, *Women of Paradise – Maryam (A.s.)*. (2021). Digital Illustration, 30.5 x 40.7 cm. © Courtesy the artist
Right: Farwa Moledina, *Women of Paradise – Aasiyah (A.s.)*. (2021). Digital Illustration, 30.5 x 40.7 cm. © Courtesy the artist

Ikon shows a new work, *Women of Paradise* (2022) by Birmingham-based artist Farwa Moledina (9 September - 13 November 2022). It is a study of the four women promised paradise in Islamic tradition, including Maryam (a.s.), mother of Isa (a.s.), otherwise known as Mary, mother of Jesus.

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.

Presented in Ikon's Tower Room, *Women of Paradise* 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 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 which are hinged together, framing digitally printed textile and embroidery. The arched shape of the frames resembles a Mihrab – a niche found in the walls of mosques that indicates the direction of prayer. The textiles and embroidery are composed of patterns which relate to the identities of the women represented. For example, the pattern for Aasiyah (a.s.) (the adoptive mother of Moses/Musa (a.s.)) is made from images of rivers, Moses baskets, pyramids and Quranic verses relevant to her story.

The patterns are inspired by principles of Islamic design, such as recurrence, symmetry and abstraction. Islamic art encourages reflection of the self and the universe, and the exploration of what lies beneath the visual surface of this world. In the work's textiles and embroidery, shapes are placed within other shapes until a pattern begins to emerge. These multi-layered compositions invite viewers to examine preconceived notions of Muslim women and Islamic tradition.

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

Moledina's exhibition is accompanied by limited edition prints of each individual Woman 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. *Women of Paradise*, Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl, £150, edition of 10. Visit shop.ikon-gallery.org for more details.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small and Muskeen Liddar by email r.small@ikon-gallery.org and m.liddar@ikon-gallery.org or call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

Social Media Handles - Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:
[@ikongallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery) [#IkonGallery](https://twitter.com/IkonGallery)

Links: ikon-gallery.org

Notes to Editors:

1. Farwa Moledina has exhibited widely within the West Midlands including Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Midlands Art Centre, Ikon Gallery and The New Art Gallery Walsall. In 2020, Moledina exhibited work across two venues in

Lahore as part of *A Rich Tapestry*, a collateral exhibition for the Lahore Biennale (LB02) organised by Ikon Gallery and Aisha Khalid. Moledina's work has been acquired by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, The New Art Gallery Walsall and private collectors. farwamoledina.com

2. (a.s.) is an abbreviation of the arabic term *Alayhis Salaam*. It is used after the name of any religious figure to mean 'peace be upon him/her' as a sign of respect.
3. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art. ikon-gallery.org
4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
5. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. ACE support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, ACE will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. artscouncil.org.uk