

Ahmed Mater: Mecca Journeys



December 1, 2017–April 8, 2018

Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia Gallery of Contemporary Art, 4th Floor

Ahmed Mater: Mecca Journeys takes visitors through the holiest city in the Islamic world. It presents a compelling portrait of the massive urban redevelopment now under way and its effects on residents and the millions of *hajj* pilgrims who travel there every year. Saudi artist Ahmed Mater has documented this unprecedented expansion for nearly a decade.

The exhibition is anchored by monumental photographs from his project *Desert of Pharan: Unofficial Histories Behind the Mass Expansion of Mecca*, alongside large-scale videos and installations. In addition to showing the influx of wealth, photographs detail the lives of workers on construction sites and of migrant groups.

"I need to be here, in the city of Mecca, now, experiencing, absorbing, and recording my place in this moment of transformation, after which things may never be the same again," states Mater. "It has become important for me to identify with this place and to understand how this constellation of change, as well as the forces that are shaping it, will affect the community of which I am a part."

Focusing on Mecca as both a symbolic site of worship and a contemporary urban center grappling with the consequences of unremitting growth, *Mecca Journeys* presents a portrait of the complex cultural dynamics at work in the city today.