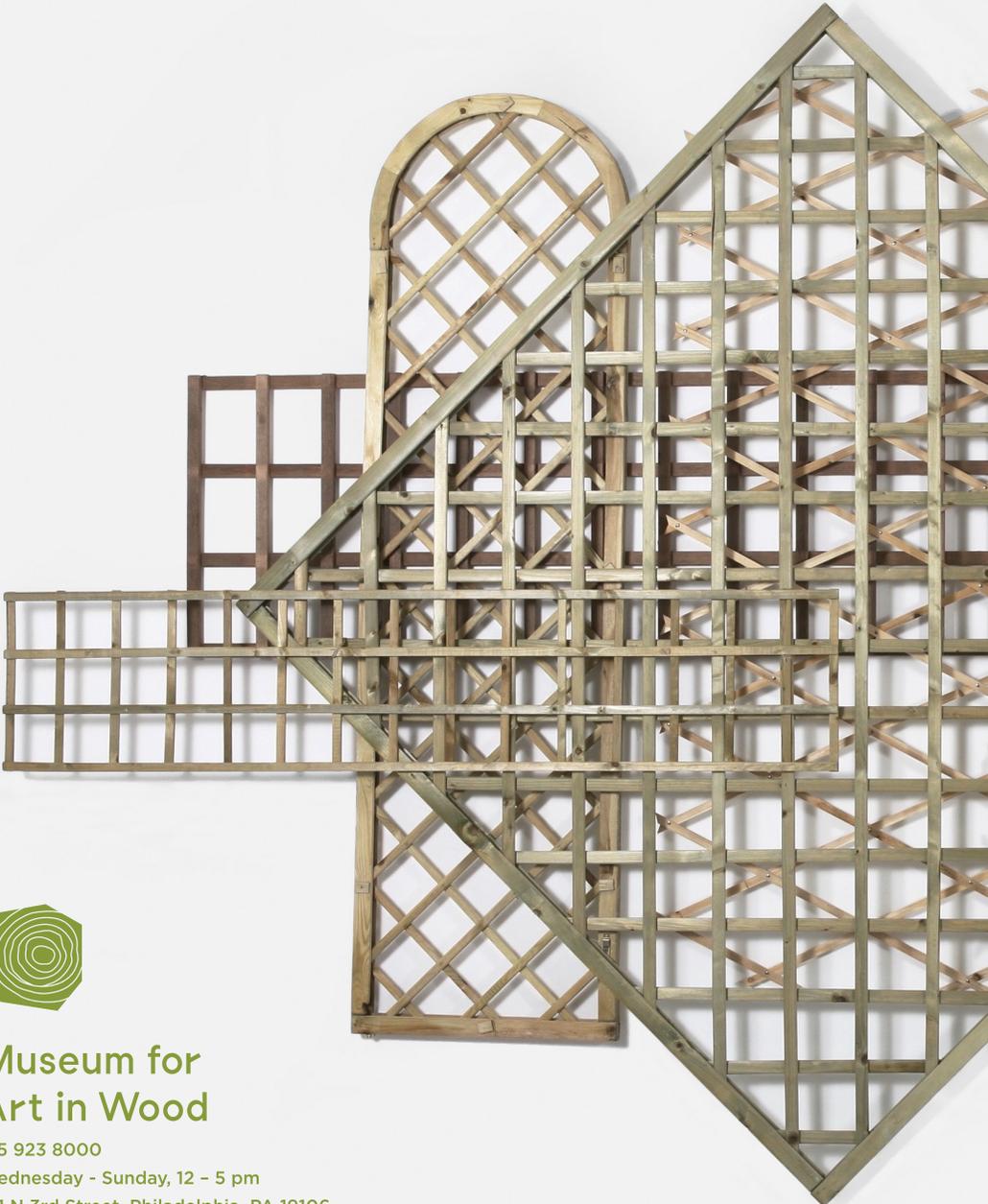


# THE MASHRABIYA PROJECT

March 3 – July 23, 2023



Museum for  
Art in Wood

215 923 8000

Wednesday - Sunday, 12 - 5 pm

141 N 3rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

## THE MASHRABIYA PROJECT

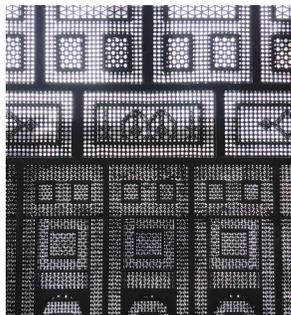
In this museum-wide effort, we take a look at the wood-turned mashrabiya, an important element of Islamic architecture and furniture. Joining two cities with rich histories in woodcraft, we consider the importance of woodworking in building and sustaining culture worldwide.

A scalable lattice-screen made of carved or turned wood or stone, the mashrabiya is an architectural element inset into many buildings across the Islamic world, throughout North Africa, West Asia, and South Asia. The mashrabiya of North Africa—fabricated of simple, individually lathe-turned wood components, which can expand and contract in response to the region's intense climate—are found in residential and sacred spaces alike.



Over time, the mashrabiya has become a symbol for artisanal and decorative skill, displaying elaborate perforated designs to become a defining element of Islamic visual culture and ornament. Each mashrabiya—built from hundreds or even thousands of small wooden pieces—exists as a testament to the importance of connection and cooperation. On its own, the humble wooden fragment has little meaning, but when assembled into an intricate framework, it becomes strong, meaningful, and breathtakingly beautiful.

*The Mashrabiya Project* is an invitation to connect with the history, craft, and cultural significance of the wood-turned mashrabiya. The Project comprises a community woodturning workshop, an exhibition of contemporary art, educational and cultural programs, interactive experiences, and a bilingual publication.



Exhibition curator

**Jennifer-Navva Milliken**

Project coordinator

**Ahmed Abdelazim**

Education coordinator

**Yaroub Al Obaidi**

Project advisor

**Seif El Rashidi**

Project partner

**Agnieszka Dobrowolska,  
ARCHiNOS Architecture,  
Cairo, Egypt**

Project staff

**Alex Félix, *Manager of Exhibitions;*  
Katie Sorenson, *Director of  
Outreach and Communications;*  
Laura Walsh, *Registrar***

Translation

**Nouran Ibrahim**

Graphics

**GD LOFT**

Workshop

**North Standard**

Augmented reality

**Artivive**

## THE MASHRABIYA PROJECT: SEEING THROUGH SPACE

While its presence is gradually disappearing in modernizing cities, the mashrabiya continues to inspire artists, writers, and historians across the Islamic world. As an architectural element, it offers control over visibility, temperature, and exposure. In traditional contexts, it was also used to divide interior spaces into public and private according to function and gender—the *salamlik* was a space designated for hospitality and male fellowship, while the *haramlik* was the space for domestic life, where women, children, and servants lived out of the sight of guests. The lattice structure of the mashrabiya allowed women to view the goings-on of the menfolk, while remaining invisible to the public eye.

Viewing the world through a screen is a very relatable concept in the present day. Alongside two traditional *mashrabiyyat*, the exhibition presents works by contemporary artists from across the Islamic world—Pakistan, Gaza, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco—demonstrating the depth of influence of this one architectural component and the range of approaches it inspires.

Each of the artists uses the mashrabiya to shape their ideas on visibility, Orientalism, feminism, and constructions of national and personal identity. Through their nuanced use of materials, they transport us to other worlds or expose us to stereotypes of beauty that are imposed on “othered” cultures. Others draw from literature and political events. And others—separated from their home countries and the comfort of familiarity—create that beauty where they are in the present and share it with us.

**Whether visiting the museum in-person or from afar, we invite you to learn about the mashrabiya through hands-on activities, events and programs, interactive experiences, and more!**

Artists

**Anila Quayyum Agha**

**Nidaa Badwan**

**Susan Hefuna**

**Nadia Kaabi-Linke**

**Majida Khattari**

**Hoda Tawakol**



## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Please check our website and social media for upcoming programs and events.

### TOURS

Guided group tours of the exhibition and collection are \$5 per person, lasting 45-60 minutes, and require a minimum of 10 guests. Please book your group tour at least one month in advance at [info@museumforartinwood.org](mailto:info@museumforartinwood.org).

We offer free 15-minute mini tours. Perfect for a lunchbreak, a Saturday stroll, or neighborhood excursion!



@museumforartinwood

#museumforartinwood

[museumforartinwood.org](http://museumforartinwood.org)



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The exhibition program at the Museum is generously supported by members of the Cambium Giving Society of the Museum for Art in Wood, the Bresler Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, William Penn Foundation, and Windgate Foundation.

Corporate support is provided by Boomerang, Inc., and Sun-Lite Corporation.

### We gratefully acknowledge our community partners

CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations, Philadelphia Chapter)  
12 Gates Arts  
Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture  
Bucks Turners, DelVal Turners, Keystone Turners  
Fairmount Parks & Recreation  
Mostafa Hassan Ali Arabesque, Cairo

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Cover image

Hoda Tawakol  
**Mashrabiya #4**  
2016

هدى توكول  
مشربية #4



## The Bresler Foundation

