

## **New Exhibit Showcases Muslim Women**

Hello there, I'm June Simms in Washington. Thank you for joining us for As It Is.

Today, we travel back in time to remember one of the most historic events in science fiction history.

We also take a trip to New York City for an unusual photographic exhibit.

But first, we hear about a new online exhibit that recognizes the work of Muslim women.

The International Museum of Women has a new exhibit on its website. The exhibit showcases the artwork, voices and stories of modern Muslim women. It includes works by Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and the Bangladeshi-American poet S. Nadia Hussain. Caty Weaver has our report.

The show is called "Muslima: Muslim Women's Art and Voices." The Arabic word "muslima" means a woman who believes in God.

Samina Ali organized the exhibit. She says one of its goals is to change negative images of Muslim women and to increase cross-cultural discussion.

“When we think of Muslim women, we think that they are weak, passive women who happens to also be veiled.”

The Indian-born Muslim writer, artist and activist says she shows uses art, film, music and interviews to present a different view of Muslim women. It shows them being strong, involved and intense about improving their societies.

“We have a beautiful documentary on there called “Half-Value Life” by Alka Sadat in Afghanistan and she’s speaking about the strife that women in Afghanistan have faced under the Taliban regime and continue to face now and how women aren’t valued.”

The filmmaker documents the struggles of Marya Bashir, a lawyer and women's rights activist. She is fighting to end political corruption and violence against women.

Appearance is another issue that is considered in the exhibit. Muslim women are often identified by what they wear. Boushra Almutawakel is a photographer from Yemen.

“In Yemen, when I go out I feel comfortable wearing the hijab and I wouldn’t feel comfortable otherwise.”

But, she does not like it when society requires extreme covering, from head to foot. For her part of the exhibit, she appears in several pictures with her daughter and her daughter's doll. At first, we see the three of them uncovered. Then they gradually disappear under layers of clothing.

"You have the 'abaya,' then you have a thing over the 'abaya,' then the 'neqab,' then a veil over that, and then the black gloves, and I just found it so alarming. And to me personally, I didn't find that it had anything to do with religion. I felt like they were trying to cover the women out of extinction because the next thing from covering them up is just stay at home, you might as well not even be seen. So that's the idea behind the 'Mother, Daughter, Doll' series."

The International Museum of Women hopes the show will educate online visitors. You can view the exhibit "MUSLIMA: Muslim Women's Art and Voices until the end of this year at [muslima.imow.org](http://muslima.imow.org). I'm Caty Weaver.

And I'm June Simms. You are listening to As It Is.

## **French Artist Turns Times Square Inside Out**

The man known as JR has been changing the look of cities since making a name for himself as a street artist in Paris. The young French artist has used large portrait photographs to let people express who they are.

Recently, JR came to Manhattan and Times Square, where he did a New York City version of his now famous project.

Poster-sized pictures of New Yorkers covered the ground, sides of buildings and a huge sign in New York's Times Square. People of all ages and races took part in the project.

"It's really cool."

"It makes a statement showing that there's all different types of people in the world."

"The human expressions and the unique feelings that each one of them is expressing, you know, I think that's beautiful."

The project is called "Inside Out New York City." Between April 22 and May 10, nearly 6,000 people waited in line to have their photographs taken at a truck in Times Square. Their photos were then reproduced on huge posters.

JR won the celebrated Technology, Entertainment and Design, or TED, Prize in 2011. He used the one-hundred-thousand dollars in prize money to pay for his Inside Out project. One of his goals is to create large portrait galleries in cities around the world.

During his acceptance speech for the TED Prize, JR invited people to join him in making Inside Out an international participatory art project. He asked them to use cameras to define the causes that are important to them, and to turn their untold stories into works of public art.

“Let me turn this thing inside out. Let them do the photo the way it makes sense for them and with the message they want. I love the whole interaction about it. Because it’s not if the picture is nice or not nice, it’s about the whole process -- people waiting, people talking with other people. The whole process is about interaction.”

Since then, he has received more than 185,000 posters from more than 100 countries. JR says art is not supposed to change the world. But he says it can change the way we see the world.

A documentary film about the project was shown on the HBO television network earlier this week.

## **Star Wars Remembered**

Finally, thirty-six years ago, “in a galaxy far, far away,” a science fiction movie called “Star Wars: A New Hope” opened in American theaters. It was the first of six movies in George Lucas’s now famous “Star Wars” epic. Together, the films became one of the most successful series of all time, winning numerous awards and earning a reported four billion dollars.

The series made household names of characters like Han Solo, Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker, Yoda and Darth Vader. It also left us with the famous saying "May the Force be with you." May 25<sup>th</sup> marks the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of that first "Star Wars" film.

And that is As It Is. Thanks for sharing part of your day with us. For questions or comments about our show, email us at [special@voanews.com](mailto:special@voanews.com).

I'm June Simms in Washington. Join me next weekend for more As It Is. Until then, "May the Force be with you."