

NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery Presents  
**Slavs and Tatars: *Mirrors for Princes***  
On View February 28 through May 30, 2015

*Cycle Travels To Five Venues, Unveiling New Work With Each Unique Installation*

*Related Events include a Book Launch at Art Dubai  
and an Artist Residency on the NYU Abu Dhabi Campus*



Slavs and Tatars, *Hung and Tart (full cyan)*, 2014. Handblown glass. 34 x 16 x 12 cm. Image courtesy the artists.

**Abu Dhabi, February 17, 2015: New York University Abu Dhabi Art Gallery (NYUAD Art Gallery)** presents a major solo exhibition of the art collective **Slavs and Tatars**, titled ***Mirrors for Princes***, on view February 28 through May 30, 2015. The exhibition is their most ambitious, immersive installation to date, with new work occupying the 7,000-square-foot exhibition space at NYUAD Art Gallery.

The exhibition and accompanying book trace the current obsession with self-help to a medieval genre of political science, “mirrors for princes,” shared among Christian and Muslim lands, with Machiavelli’s *The Prince* being the most famous example. At NYUAD Art Gallery the artists look to these texts as an urgent precedent of generosity and critique, and as a case study of the balance between faith and state, issues that continue to resonate today across the Middle East, North America and Europe.

In the exhibition, visitors traverse three environments, each radically different from the last. The first is a five-channel audio installation in which a series of mirrored speakers arranged on traditional book stands play excerpts from an 11th-century, Turkic “mirror for prince” called *Kutadgu Bilig (Wisdom of*

*Royal Glory*) in five languages (Turkish, Uighur, Polish, German, and Arabic). Next, a dark, psychedelic gallery holds a series of glowing, fetishistic sculptures that explore the text's concern with grooming, both one's hair as well as one's heart and one's tongue. Finally, visitors discover a serene teahouse and reading room, where the books available are curated by the artists from the NYU Abu Dhabi library collection, and merge with their art practice.

A book published by JRPIRingier, also titled *Mirrors for Princes*, has been commissioned by NYUAD Art Gallery and edited by Anthony Downey of *Ibraaz*. A hybrid of scholarly research and original artworks, the book features essays specially commissioned on the research topic, as well as an interview with the artists by Downey and Beatrix Ruf.

In preparation for the exhibition, the collective is participating in an artist residency on the new campus of NYU Abu Dhabi, which opened in 2014. Maya Allison, curator of the exhibition, and Gallery Director of NYUAD Art Gallery, explains, "Slavs and Tatars link witty, irreverent, creative practice to scholarly and field research, so naturally they are ideal for a University gallery audience, and its surrounding community. Like many in the NYUAD academic community, the artists work at the intersection of multiple histories, in this case from Eastern Europe to Western China. Their projects resonate with the regional audience, and with the diverse community within NYUAD's student body and faculty."

### **About Slavs and Tatars**

Slavs and Tatars, formed in 2006, is an art collective that describes itself as "a faction of polemics and intimacies devoted to an area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia. The collective's work spans several media, disciplines, and a broad spectrum of cultural registers (high and low.) They are best known for their use of a playful presentation style to disarm and engage viewers in the content of the research underlying their work. Their publications and art installations explore relationships among countries, visual cultures, and histories. In 2014, their work was presented in five solo exhibitions at major international venues. Notable exhibitions include solo shows at MoMA in New York, Kunsthalle Zurich, Vienna Secession, and Dallas Museum of Art, as well as inclusion in the *The Ungovernables* (New Museum Triennial), and the 10<sup>th</sup> Sharjah Biennial.

### **Exhibition Cycle Travel Dates**

**Slavs and Tatars: *Mirrors for Princes*** is a series of unique installations drawn from their research. The cycle manifests at five different venues, each with different curators. These include: Kunsthalle Zurich (August 30 – November 9, 2014); NYUAD Art Gallery (February 28 – May 30, 2015); Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane, Australia (October 24 – December 19, 2015); Blaffer Museum of Art, Houston, Texas (January 16 – March 19, 2016); and the Museum der bildenden Künste (MDBK), Leipzig, Germany (November 15 – March 3, 2014).

### **About the Artist Residency**

Leading up to the exhibition, the artists relocated their studio to the campus of NYUAD for a University-immersion residency. This residency grew out of a desire by the artists to benefit from a scholarly community, particularly one like that of NYUAD, which supports in-depth research across many regions. The artists are presenting in various classes offered in the curriculum and furthering their research into subjects that continue to resonate for them and the wider community, from satire in the Muslim world to the importance of orality within the Gulf literary tradition.

The residency on campus has also resulted in a more free-form installation alongside the main gallery exhibition. Slavs and Tatars are transforming a seminar room into a teahouse or *majilis* (gathering) room, which will offer a space of reflection and rest on campus as well as an alternate entrance and

narrative to the exhibition at the Art Gallery.

### **About the Publication**

In conjunction with the exhibition, a book titled *Mirrors for Princes* has been published by JRPIRingier, edited by Anthony Downey of *Ibraaz*, and commissioned by the NYUAD Gallery for the Mirrors for Princes exhibition cycle, in collaboration with the other venues. It is a hybrid of an artist book and a collection of research essays commissioned from scholars, artists, and curators, including Manan Ahmed Asif, Maya Allison, David Crowley, Anna Della Subin, Lloyd Ridgeon, Slavs and Tatars, and Negin Yavari. This marks the first time the artists have included a discussion of their own work in their books, here in an interview with Anthony Downey and Beatrix Ruf. Softcover; 192 pages; 160 color illustrations. A book launch will take place March 19 as part of Art Dubai's VIP Programme.

### **About NYUAD Art Gallery**

The Art Gallery, which opened on November 1, 2014, and is located at the main entrance to NYUAD's Saadiyat Campus, presents curated exhibitions of art and material culture across historical and contemporary topics, with a special emphasis on subjects of both regional concern and international significance. Through focused exhibitions, events, and publications, the gallery serves as a catalyst and locus of intellectual and creative activity, linking the University with the Abu Dhabi public and a worldwide community of artists, curators, and scholars.

The 664-square-meter (7,000-square-foot) exhibition space features soaring double-height ceilings and an outdoor installation space. It is fully equipped for exhibitions in all media, with custom walls and lighting allowing for experimental and traditional installations, from video art to ancient works.

The curatorial platform supports scholarly and experimental installations, artists' projects, guest curators, and landmark exhibitions. The coming exhibition program centers on three themes: landscape and the built environment, Islamic art and culture, and art in global dialogue.

The NYUAD Art Gallery hours are Monday to Thursday, 11am–5pm, and Saturday, 2pm–5pm. To contact the gallery, call +971-2-628-8000, or visit the website: [www.nyuad-artgallery.org](http://www.nyuad-artgallery.org).

### **About NYU Abu Dhabi**

NYU Abu Dhabi consists of a highly selective liberal arts and science college (including engineering), and a world center for advanced research and scholarship — all fully integrated with each other and connected to NYU in New York. Together, NYU New York, NYU Abu Dhabi, and NYU Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global network university, with faculty and students from each campus spending "semesters away" at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents. NYU Abu Dhabi graduated its first class in spring of 2014. It is attended by a diverse student body representing over 100 countries.

Join the conversation on Facebook (NYUAD Art Gallery), Twitter (@NYUADArtGallery), and Instagram (@NYUADArtGallery) and use the hashtags #SlavsandTatars and #MirrorsforPrinces when posting.

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