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Marwan Bassiouni

New Western Views (Preview)

Opening | Thursday, 18 September 2025, 6 - 9 PM

On view | 19 September – 5 November 2025

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to present *New Western Views (Preview)*, the first solo exhibition in the region by Marwan Bassiouni, opening 18 September 2025. Featuring photographs taken between 2018 and 2022 from inside mosques across the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK, the exhibition offers a first look at Bassiouni's ongoing international project. These works reframe landscape photography through the lens of lived Muslim presence in the contemporary West.

Each image centres on a window—an aperture onto the outside world, rarely found in purpose-built mosques. Through these portals, we glimpse familiar Western landscapes: traffic junctions, supermarkets, apartment blocks, sports fields. But these views are not neutral. They are framed by interiors shaped by Islamic visual culture: patterned tiles, rugs, wooden minbars, and other architectural elements drawn from the diverse communities building mosques across the West. Originating from places such as Bosnia, Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Morocco, and Indonesia, these communities transform everyday suburban spaces into makeshift prayer rooms. The result is a distinctly Western scene viewed through a distinctly Islamic frame.

The works on view are large in scale, and composed with a deliberate attention to balance and spatial clarity. While photographic in medium, they depart from traditional documentary approaches. Each image is constructed with precise control over lighting, capturing both interior and exterior spaces within a single frame. This careful calibration preserves architectural and atmospheric detail, resulting in compositions that are immersive rather than descriptive.

These photographs are not about contrast for its own sake. They expose a visual and cultural layering shaped by migration, adaptation, and inherited memory. Many of these mosques occupy anonymous or repurposed structures, former shops, garages, or residential units, revealing how Muslim communities, particularly second and third-generation, have embedded their practices into the overlooked spaces of everyday life. The decorative elements often appear provisional, improvised, or partial, far from the monumental forms of classical Islamic architecture, yet no less resonant. This is not architecture as spectacle, but as orientation.

New Western Views pushes back against the long history of Orientalist image making, which has traditionally cast the Islamic world as distant, exotic, and other. Here, Bassiouni reverses that gaze. The landscape is no longer the backdrop for conquest, curiosity, or romanticisation, it is simply what exists outside the mosque window. In doing so, the work avoids the familiar tropes of both victimhood and spectacle. It doesn't ask for empathy, nor does it offer critique in the conventional sense. It operates through presence, through the simple but loaded act of looking out.

The photographs are composed with precision but not artificiality. Natural light, careful exposure, and a documentary sensibility allow each interior and exterior to coexist without collapse. The result is not a blending of worlds, but a visual articulation of how they are held together, sometimes comfortably, sometimes awkwardly, but always on their own terms.

New Western Views opens up a critical space within both landscape photography and contemporary art more broadly. It invites viewers to consider who gets to define the visual language of place, and how diasporic identities are expressed not through performance, but through the quiet architecture of daily life. This is not about visibility imposed from outside, but self-definition from within.

MARWAN BASSIOUNI

Marwan Bassiouni (b. 1985, Morges, Switzerland) is a Swiss-Egyptian-American artist and photographer currently based in the Netherlands. His work explores the intersection of Islamic identity and Western culture, often through contemplative, large-scale photographic installations.

He holds a BA in photography from The Royal Academy of Art (KABK) and a photographer CFC from the Photography School of Vevey (CEPV). His work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Photography Museum of The Hague, Netherlands (2019); Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2020); Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland (2023); International Center of Photography, New York, USA (2024); Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur, Switzerland (2019) Foam, Amsterdam,

Netherlands (2022); Museum Schloss Moyland, Germany (2023); Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation, Germany (2023); Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Netherlands (2024); Shanghai Center of Photography, China (2022); Unseen Photo Fair, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2019); Art Düsseldorf, Germany (2023); Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece (2019); Festival Circulation(s), Paris, France (2020); Kunsthal Helmond, Netherlands (2019); Biel/Bienne Festival of Photography, Switzerland (2021); Z33, Hasselt, Belgium (2022); and Cultuurhuis De Warande, Turnhout, Belgium (2020), among others.

Bassiouni's work is included in international private and permanent collections of institutions such as the Kunsthhaus of Zurich (Switzerland), Kunstmuseum Bern (Switzerland), the Netherlands Photo Museum, Kunstmuseum Den Haag (Netherlands) and the International Center of Photography in New York (USA).

He is the recipient of the W. Eugene Smith Student Grant, the Harry Pennings Prize, the Prix Circulation(s)-Fujifilm and several other awards and nominations. His book *New Dutch Views* was a finalist for the Aperture First Book Award at Paris Photo. Since 2020, his work has generously been supported by the Mondriaan Funds and Bassiouni has been awarded grants from the Mondriaan Funds in 2020, 2022 and 2024.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organises art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presenting Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary art community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit: www.lawrieshabibi.com

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