

**Hassan Hajjaj Celebrates His Personal Heroes with
Immersive, Site-Specific Installation at Worcester Art Museum**

**Display Showcases Fusion of Artistic
Disciplines and Cultural Influences**



Worcester, MA—June 29, 2015—This fall, visitors to the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) will step into the vibrant world of Moroccan-born, UK-based artist Hassan Hajjaj with an exhibition that pays tribute to musicians from around the world who have inspired him. *Hassan Hajjaj: My Rock Stars* features a new video installation and related series of photographs presented in dialogue with seating areas and décor designed by the artist that encourages visual connections to the works on display. This immersive environment—designed expressly for the Museum—showcases Hajjaj’s hybrid of multiple art forms, ranging from video and portraiture to furniture design. The “rock stars” featured in the exhibition embody cultural fusion, continuing the artist’s exploration of globalization and its effects on contemporary society. The exhibition will be on view November 7, 2015 through March 6, 2016.

“We look forward to experiencing how Hassan Hajjaj will infuse the bold energy of his aesthetic into our museum,” said Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European Art at the Worcester Art Museum. “His references to the global marketplace resonate deeply with Worcester’s legacy as an international manufacturing hub. This connection, along with the universal appeal of his work, makes the Worcester Art Museum an ideal setting to view the exhibition in context of our global collection and unique history.”

The eclectic group of international musicians and singers featured in Hajjaj’s portrait photographs comes to life in his accompanying 2012 video entitled *My Rock Stars Experimental, Volume I*. The film is made of nine separately filmed performances showcasing the musicians’ myriad styles, including hip-hop, jazz, and Gnawa (traditional North African spiritual songs by descendants of enslaved West Africans). Hajjaj transforms his subjects into “global rock stars” by designing costumes that combine traditional African fabrics and global luxury brands. He also creates the environments for their performances by contrasting bold patterned backdrops with vibrant costumes, evoking African studio portraiture of the 1960s and ‘70s and high-fashion photography.

A playful mixture of local and global infuses the installation. The portraits of the nine performers are displayed in handcrafted frames lined with everyday consumer goods sourced from Moroccan markets, adding visual richness to the photographs. Situated in an environment designed by the artist, the display evokes the color and energy of a contemporary Moroccan *souk*, or marketplace. A seating area features furniture Hajjaj created using recycled materials,

such as Coca-Cola crates, and other familiar consumer goods with Arabic labels that reinforce the omnipresence of global commerce.

Hajjaj was born in Larache, in northern Morocco, and moved to London as a teenager. Known primarily for his work as a photographer, Hajjaj's art embraces a wide range of media including furniture and clothing design and, most recently, video. His work fuses high and low, drawing from contemporary street culture, fashion, consumer culture, and the power of brands, to explore the blurred lines of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized society. Hajjaj's work is in private and public collections worldwide, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (LACMA), the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris, and Kamel Lazaar Foundation in Tunisia.

Hassan Hajjaj: My Rock Stars was organized by the Newark Museum. The exhibition is curated by Christa Clarke, Senior Curator, Arts of Global Africa, and organized in Worcester by Jon L. Seydl.

ABOUT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM:

Founded in 1898, the Worcester Art Museum serves Worcester and the broader region. The Museum houses an encyclopedic collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media. WAM's collection has historically been strongest in European Renaissance paintings, but with recent acquisitions and donations, like Veronese's *Venus Disarming Cupid* and the integration of the collection from the Higgins Armory Museum, it continues to diversify and expand its curatorial and programmatic offerings. Symbolized by the opening of the Salisbury Street doors in 2012, the Museum continues toward its goal of accessibility for all visitors.

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Image Credit:
Hassan Hajjaj
Mr Toliver, 2010
Metallic lambda print on 3mm white dibond
53 1/2h x 39 5/8w in / 136h x 100.5w cm
Courtesy of the artist and Taymour Grahne Gallery, New York