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may 15, 2009
 for immediate release

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digital images available upon request (see last
 page of release)



Migration of Somali refugees is chronicled in Weisman exhibition
Stories from the Somali Diaspora: Photographs by Abdi Roble

Exhibition dates: June 20–September 27, 2009

(Minneapolis, MN) – The Weisman Art Museum (WAM) presents *Stories from the Somali Diaspora: Photographs by Abdi Roble*, running June 20 through September 27, 2009. The Weisman invites the community to a free Family Day Celebration related to the exhibition on Saturday, June 20 (see “Related Programs,” p. 2).

Since 2003, Somali-born photographer Roble has documented the forced dispersal of hundreds of thousands of Somalis from their traditional homeland. This displacement dates back to Somalia’s political and economic disintegration in the early 1990s as warlords battled for supremacy. The crisis continues today as new fighting displaces thousands of civilians every year.

The exhibition’s fifty-five black-and-white images document the transition of Somali communities from Africa to the United States. The show includes photographs taken in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Columbus, Ohio; and Portland, Maine—home to three of the largest Somali communities in the U.S. Several photographs trace one family’s journey from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya to their arrival in California and subsequent resettlement in Maine. The photographs depict a range of subjects from women carrying sacks of grain in Africa to men pushing shopping carts in California.

Roble says he wanted to capture the experience of a people torn from their homeland with virtually no belongings, and that it is important to record the experiences of refugees before memories fade and stories are forgotten.

This exhibition was organized by the Columbus Museum of Art and Arts Midwest in partnership with the Ohio Arts Council. It premiered at the Columbus Museum of Art in 2007 and traveled to the Bates College Museum of Art in Lewiston, Maine in the winter of 2009. After its run at the Weisman, the exhibition will travel to the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, N.D.

WAM curator Diane Mullin says Minneapolis is a natural stop on the show’s tour, since some of the exhibition’s images originated here. “Roble is documenting the migration of Somalis into American cities, including Minneapolis,” she said.

Abdi Roble was born in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1964. He was a professional soccer player for most of his adult life in Somalia. Political turmoil and a stagnant economy compelled Roble to emigrate from Somalia to the United States in 1989. He took up residence in Columbus, Ohio.

When Roble discovered a camera at a Coumbus flea market, he was inspired to become a photographer. By 1994, he was a freelance photographer for the Columbus *Dispatch* and the Columbus *Post*. Shortly thereafter, his photographs appeared in *Leica View* magazine and he went to work at Midwest Photo Exchange. In 2003, he founded the Somali Documentary Project with Doug Rutledge, Tariq Tarey, and Stanley Kayne. The Project’s mission is to use photography to produce an archival record of the members of the Somali Diaspora while they are still engaging in the cultural practices of their homeland. He is also the author, with writer Doug Rutledge, of the book *The Somali Diaspora: A Journey Away* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008). For more information, see www.somaliproject.org.

For information on additional exhibitions, see page 2 of this release.





RELATED PROGRAMS

Programs are free.

Saturday June 20, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

PHOTOGRAPHING JOURNEYS: A FAMILY DAY

Celebrate Somali culture at a day filled with interactive family activities. Meet photographer Abdi Roble. Take a tour of the exhibition. Learn to make a map of a journey you've taken. Experience henna art and listen to stories told in English and Somali. Enjoy music and complimentary refreshments. The day will also feature photography projects by neighborhood youth and screenings of documentaries made by local Somali immigrant girls.

Limited free transportation to the Weisman Art Museum is available from selected points. Limited parking is available in the Weisman Garage. Additional parking is available in the East River Road Garage. More information: weisman.umn.edu.

Presented in conjunction with World Refugee Day.

Saturday June 27, 5:30 p.m.

PRESENTATION AND RECEPTION WITH ABDI ROBLE AND DOUG RUTLEDGE

Artist Abdi Roble and writer Doug Rutledge discuss the exhibition and their Somali Documentary Project. Roble and Rutledge co-founded the Project and are co-authors of *The Somali Diaspora: A Journey Away* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008). The book will be available for purchase and signing by the authors at the end of the presentation. This event is co-sponsored with the University of Minnesota Department of English.

Thursday July 23, 7 p.m.

WAM CHATTER: WHEN DOES THE DIASPORA BECOME HOME?

followed by live music from Somali-American musicians

The migration of people has characterized much of human history. July's WAM Chatter, presented in association with *Stories of the Somali Diaspora: Photographs by Abdi Roble*, gathers three thinkers to consider when and if the diaspora can become home. Moderated by Dr. Michelle Wright, associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota. Panelists include local ethnomusicologist Justin Schell and artist Nancy Ann Coyne. The presentation is followed by live musical performances from local Somali-American bands and musicians.

OTHER EXHIBITIONS AT WAM

Au Courant: Robert Rauschenberg's Currents

Exhibition dates: June 20—October 4, 2009

Art(ists) on the Verge: 2008–2009 Northern Lights/Jerome Emerging Artists Commissions

Exhibitions dates: July 5—August 23, 2009

press
release

WAM

weisman art museum

ABOUT THE WEISMAN

The Weisman Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free. For more information on museum hours, driving directions, and parking options, visit weisman.umn.edu

Stories from the Somali Diaspora: Photographs by Abdi Roble

June 20–September 27, 2009

Digital images available upon request. Email Christopher James at james052@umn.edu or call 612-625-9685.

REPRESENTATIVE IMAGES:



IMAGE CREDITS

top left: Abdi Roble, *Gun Down*, 2005, gelatin silver print

top right: Abdi Roble, *Voting Day*, 2006, gelatin silver print

bottom left: Abdi Roble, *First Day of School*, 2006, gelatin silver print

bottom right: Abdi Roble, *Boys in Pool*, 2004, gelatin silver print