

**Contact:** Brooke Daniels  
617-369-3605  
bdaniels@smfa.edu



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston to Celebrate Alumna Lalla Essaydi  
at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Medal Award Gala, May 22**

*The School's Medal Award is annually presented to individuals for their contributions to the art world*

---

**Boston, MA (May 22, 2012)**—First presented in 1996, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's (SMFA), Medal Award has been granted to some of the most noteworthy artists and influential art patrons of our time in recognition of their commitment to and influence on the art world. This year, SMFA is proud to honor international artist and alumna **Lalla Essaydi** at a gala event on May 22, 2012, in the Ruth and Carl J. Shapiro Family Courtyard at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Essaydi's art, which often combines Islamic calligraphy with representations of the female body, addresses the complex reality of Arab female identity from the unique perspective of personal experience. In much of her work, she returns to her Moroccan girlhood, looking back on it as an adult woman caught somewhere between past and present, and as an artist, exploring the language in which to "speak" from this uncertain space. She has worked in numerous media, including painting, video, film, installation and analog photography.

"Lalla's deeply personal body of work challenges us to rethink our experience of identity, inequality, and political divisions," says Chris Bratton, SMFA President. "As an artist who gives us a true sense of a new and unfolding world, it's very fitting that we honor her with this year's Award."

Essaydi grew up in Morocco. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1999, Diploma in 2000 and Master of Fine Arts in 2003 from SMFA's joint program with Tufts University. Essaydi is represented by Schneider Gallery in Chicago, by Howard Yezerksi Gallery in Boston and by Edwynn Houk Gallery in New York. Her work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and internationally and is represented in a number of collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Williams College Museum of Art; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Fries Museum; the Kodak Museum of Art and the Louvre. Upcoming exhibitions include the Sharjah Calligraphy Biennial (United Arab Emirates), April 1–June 1, 2012; "Lalla Essaydi: Revisions, A Retrospective" at the Smithsonian African Museum of Art (Washington DC), April 4–November, 2012 and "Les Femmes du Magreb" at the Orientalist Museum (Qatar), March–June 2013.

Co-chaired by longtime arts advocates Barbara and Jonathan Lee, the 17<sup>th</sup> annual gala event includes cocktails, dinner, the award presentation and a silent auction of student work. Proceeds from the event benefit scholarships and additional educational opportunities essential for SMFA students' paths to success. The Medal Award, endowed through the generosity of Carol and Arnold Haynes, has been awarded to Alex Katz, Kiki Smith, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Ellen Gallagher and Robert Rauschenberg, among others.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [www.smfa.edu/medal](http://www.smfa.edu/medal) or call 617-369-3591.

***About the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:***

*Founded in 1876 and accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA), is one of only three art schools in the country affiliated with a major museum—the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Our mission is to provide an education in the fine arts—for undergraduate and graduate artists—that is interdisciplinary and self-directed. This education values cultural, artistic and intellectual diversity; it embraces a wide range of media; it stresses the development of individual vision and its relation to culture in general; it values equally the knowledge gained by thinking and doing; it is deeply engaged with the world as a whole. If the mission is constant, its practice is always transforming. For more information about our programs and partnerships, visit [www.smfa.edu](http://www.smfa.edu).*

###