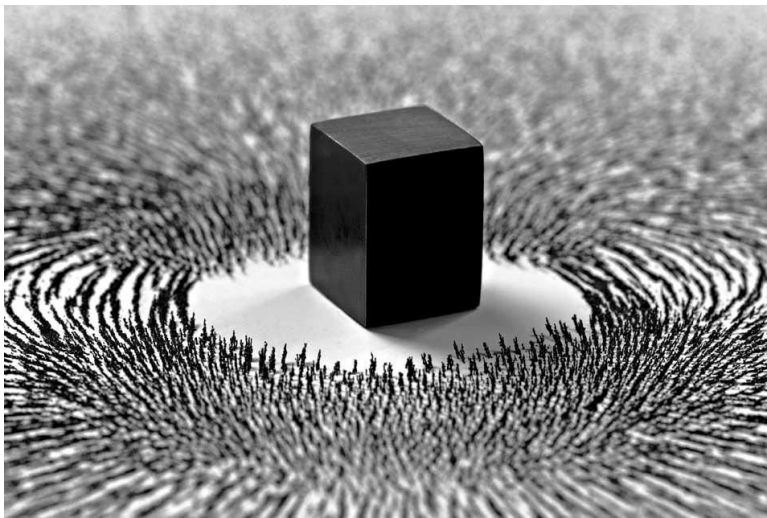


# THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN HEALING ARTS INITIATIVE

Sale of Ahmed Mater's *Magnetism* (price realised: 120,000 USD) breaks the artist's record at auction to launch the global *Healing Arts Initiative*



Magnetism (Installation) by Ahmed Mater was the first artwork to be auctioned as part of The Future is Unwritten's Healing Arts Initiative.

**London, November 24, 2020** –The Future is Unwritten's Healing Arts Initiative launched this Wednesday 24th November with the sale of *Magnetism* (2012, Price Realised: \$120,000) by Saudi Arabian artist, Dr. Ahmed Mater. The work, which was sold to support a global COVID-19 response through the arts, was offered as part of Christie's Middle East Contemporary Art Sale in London.

One of his most important pieces to date, Mater fuses art, science and the concept of identity and religion, creating one of the 21st Century's most iconic cultural images from the Islamic world. The central focus of the piece is a cuboid magnet that resembles the black draped Ka'bah, the central element of the Meccan rites, considered by Muslims everywhere to be the most sacred place on Earth. Around the cube are spiral patterns made of tens of thousands of particles of iron evoking the Hajj, an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, that include a series of rituals like walking counter-clockwise seven times around the House of God. Mater's counterpoint of square and circle, whirl and cube, of black and white, light and dark, places the primal elements of form and tone in dynamic equipoise. The overall aim of the artist is simple, but enchantingly alluring. Given, during COVID-19, Mecca was seen mostly empty for the first time in its history, this work was chosen to launch the



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Healing Arts Auction series. Details of lots from other categories will be announced in the coming months.

As part of **The Future is Unwritten's** initiative to engage the international art world in UN priority areas, and **World Health Organization (WHO)** Solidarity Series of Events, the Healing Arts Initiative in collaboration with Christie's will run over the course of a year, with works to be offered in a number of sales across a wide range of genres. The 14-month Initiative, which is being produced by CULTURUNNERS in collaboration with the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations and WHO Foundation as part of the UN's 75th Anniversary Commemorations, aims to increase awareness around a global path to recovery and raise critical funds to mobilize artists and health professionals in support of communities most vulnerable, at-risk and with the weakest health systems to act effectively in response to the pandemic.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, comments: "This initiative represents a unique opportunity for the art world to step up to this global challenge and support communities on the front line of the pandemic, ensuring everyone, everywhere has the tools they need to overcome it."

All proceeds from this initiative will benefit the **WHO Foundation**, supporting the urgently needed mental health response to the pandemic through the applied use of arts in health-giving and recovery; and **The Future is Unwritten's Artist Response Fund**, supporting artist-led projects that directly facilitate community healing and healthcare messaging in the aftermath of the pandemic. In addition to the auction series there is a program of [educational events](#) covering urgent thematic areas from emergency response, to mental health, to the health effects of the environmental crisis, to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage, each through the lens of the supportive power of the arts.

Christopher Bailey, WHO Arts & Health Lead, adds: "Art has a unique ability to help us comfort, confront, contextualize and create community. And when embracing science and evidence as a bedrock, art and culture can help us imagine a better way forward to a positive future."

Artist-led projects being supported include an urgent public-health campaign in Yemen; The Painted Desert project by artist-physician Dr. Chip Thomas addressing the nutrition crisis among the Navajo Nation in Arizona (Navajo deaths from COVID-19 were among the highest per capita in the US); a cultural preservation project with Yazidi communities on the Iraqi-Syrian border following the ISIS genocide in 2014; a public health data campaign by Mona Chalabi in New York City; and community rebuilding projects in Beirut, Khartoum and failing small town main streets across the United States.

Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Commemoration of the United Nations 75th Anniversary commented: "Arts are socially influential and help us better understand the world and one another. It is



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imperative for the United Nations to engage with the arts and include cultural voices in its global policy discussions at this time.”

Dirk Boll, President of Christie's Europe, Middle East and Africa, remarks: “Christie's is honoured to be working with the WHO Foundation and UN75, offering a platform for artists and works in the coming year, to assist individuals and communities. We're also very pleased to present the work of Ahmed Mater as the debut lot in our year-long auction collaboration, today one of the most celebrated artists from Saudi Arabia, as well as a doctor and an individual who is very active in promoting the different artistic strengths of his region, dedicated to making culture accessible to as many as possible.”

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### **ABOUT The Future is Unwritten**

The Future is Unwritten is an initiative by CULTURUNNERS and the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations (WCPUN) Arts & Culture Advisory Council, launched in 2020 in partnership with UN75. TFIU facilitates urgent cooperation between the international Arts and Culture sector and the United Nations in order to accelerate implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. TFIU's 2020 programming partner is the Open Mind Project. [www.thefutureisunwritten.org](http://www.thefutureisunwritten.org)

### **ABOUT the World Health Organization (WHO)**

The World Health Organisation works with 194 Member States, across six regions, and from more than 150 offices, to achieve better health for everyone, everywhere. WHO's Arts & Health Program looks at the research agenda around the health benefits of the arts, in everyday life as well as an instrument in the field. [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

### **ABOUT the WHO Foundation**

Based in Geneva, the WHO Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation that sets out to protect the health and well-being of everyone in every part of the world, working alongside the World Health Organization. It supports donors, scientists, experts, implementers, advocates from every country, in rapidly finding new and better solutions to the most pressing global health challenges of today and tomorrow.

The Foundation targets evidence-based initiatives with the potential to support WHO's contributions towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all). It is focused on reducing health risks, averting pandemics, better managing diseases and creating stronger health systems. It tackles these areas by building awareness and supporting its partners, including WHO, so that every life is invested in and the world ready for any health emergency that may arise. [www.who.foundation](http://www.who.foundation)



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## About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had auction sales in 2019 that totalled £4.5 billion / \$5.8 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie's offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)

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