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JACKSON FINE ART PRESENTS

LALLA ESSAYDI: HAREM REVISITED

FREDERICK SOMMER: FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

Opening Reception: Friday, May 9, 6-8 pm

Exhibition Dates: May 9 – July 3, 2014

Jackson Fine Art is pleased to announce *Harem Revisited*, a solo exhibition of photographs by Lalla Essaydi on view from May 9th through July 3rd, 2014. This will be Essaydi's third exhibition at Jackson Fine Art. In the back room, we will be showing a selection of Frederick Sommer photographs from a private collection, this will be Jackson Fine Art's first showing of work by Frederick Sommer.

"The physical harem is the dangerous frontier where sacred law and pleasure collide. This is not the harem of the Western Orientalist imagination, an anxiety-free place of euphoria and the absence of constraints, where the word "harem" has lost its dangerous edge. My harem is based on the historical reality; rather than the artistic images of the West – an idyllic, lustful dream of sexually available women, uninhibited by the moral constraints of 19th Century Europe."
Lalla Essaydi, 2010

Essaydi's work explores Islamic female identity through the unique perspective of personal experience. Born and raised in Morocco, she looks to her past as well as the representations of women in 19th century Orientalist painting to create a critical discourse with which to understand and express the complexities of the role of the modern Islamic woman. Essaydi is known for the beautiful, hand-drawn Arabic calligraphy - a sacred Islamic art form that is traditionally inaccessible to women - that adorn the skin, fabric, paper and surfaces within her images. Her subjects speak through the autobiographical texts written on their bodies and enable Essaydi to share her thoughts and

experiences as a woman caught between modernity and tradition.

In her most recent series, Essaydi makes a striking departure from her earlier work. With *Harem Revisited*, she shrouds her subjects and settings in elaborate vintage textiles handmade between the 17th and 20th century for use in wedding ceremonies and the decoration of palaces and harems. These colorful and richly embroidered caftans and draperies were generously loaned from the Nour and Boubker Temli collection. In these works, Essaydi creates a dizzying camouflage of women, texture, pattern and space, blurring the distinction between body and decoration. Submersed in the relics of centuries of tradition and subjugation, Essaydi's subjects challenge the classical notions of space and gender in Islamic culture.

With *Bullets*, Essaydi crafts a richly detailed scene of highly ornate tiles, woodwork, décor, clothing and women, out of bullet casings. In these glittering photographs, Essaydi turns the domestic space into a psychological one, while commenting on the violence within many contemporary Islamic societies.

Lalla Essaydi's work is represented in a number of collections including The Art Institute of Chicago; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; The Columbus Museum Of Art, Ohio; SF MoMA, California; the Jordan National Museum; the North Carolina Museum of Art; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; The Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar; The British National Museum, London; The Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA; the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian; and Le Louvre Museum, Paris, France amongst many others.

In addition to *Harem Revisited*, we are pleased to be exhibiting a selection of works by Frederick Sommer from a private collection. This rare collection was built by a local Atlanta collector between 1973 and 1994, he says, "Sommer, in many ways, is a cosmologist, most profound." The collector had a close relationship with both the artist and the work, writing poetry and essays about the photographs and even travelling to Arizona to spend a weekend with Sommer and his wife. Sommer was born in Italy, grew up in Brazil, and settled in Arizona in 1931 while seeking treatment for Tuberculosis. Sommer was dedicated to the traditional idea of art as a means of creating beauty; paradoxically, he often photographed aspects of the natural world that are typically considered ugly or insignificant. The subjects of Sommer's photographs are strikingly diverse ranging from disorienting landscapes and macabre aspects of the natural world to surreal arrangements of found objects and pure abstractions. This collection exemplifies Sommer's many different photographic explorations, and the collector's keen eye for selecting sharply focused, tonally lush prints that are as strikingly beautiful as they are thought provoking. "*Our Fundamental empathy is to construct that which content reveals*" – Frederick Sommer

Frederick Sommer has been exhibited by the world's leading institutions, including the George Eastman House, Rochester; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Delaware Art Museum; Serpentine Gallery, London; Charles Egan Gallery, New York; Philadelphia College of Art; Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington D.C.; Pasadena Art Museum, California; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Institute of Design, Chicago; Zimmergalerie Franck, Germany; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Work by the artist is represented in major museum collections internationally such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Maison Europeene de la Photographie; George Eastman House, Rochester; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.