

## ***Performance Series by Toronto Artist and Scientist Radha Chaddah Reframes the Narrative of Our Place in Nature.***

***Of Body and Mind, the second installment of IAM, premieres April 22, 2022, as a virtual exhibition on the Aga Khan Museum's website.***

TORONTO, CANADA — April 06, 2022 — Toronto-based visual artist and scientist Radha Chaddah brings us *Of Body and Mind*, the second of four acts of *IAM*, an immersive multimedia performance about perspective in our pandemic time. Told through dance on a 3D immersive outdoor stage, where microscopic animations of bodily tissues are cast onto a living surface of trees and grass, the languid dance and visuals together create a stunning, almost dream-like work of art.

*Of Body and Mind* follows the path of Covid-19 through the human realm where lockdown descends, and people struggle through isolation and fear of the unknown.

This second act of *IAM* comes to the public April 22, 2022, as a film of the live performance, nested in a digital exhibition presented by the Aga Khan Museum. Each act of *IAM*, whose title is derived from the Latin word for “now,” explores four realms — molecular, human, planetary, and universal. Produced during the pandemic amidst great uncertainty, Chaddah decided to shoot each act as a short film so that people could see it while they were unable to gather in person.

Trained as both artist and scientist, Chaddah presents a unique perspective on the transformative impacts of the pandemic.

Known for making art about invisible realities like the cellular world and electromagnetic energy, Chaddah began the *IAM* project not only in response to the virus that changed our inner and outer lives, but ultimately, as an exploration of the bigger picture — our place in nature.

The pandemic reminds us, she says, that “we are just a thread in the interwoven fabric of nature, a small part of a much larger evolutionary narrative.”

“It challenges our own perceptions of human status in the natural world — we are inextricably interconnected, embedded in nature, and can neither live outside of it nor control it.”

For *Of Body and Mind*, Chaddah once again collaborated with choreographer Allie Blumas and Toronto dance collective Open Fortress, featuring dancers Lee Gelbloom and Anna Mayberry, and composer Dan Bédard, who has gained recognition for his experimental film scores.

“We began with a creative exchange among all of our collaborators to support the development of the emotional and behavioural language of the dance,” says Chaddah, who started the tissue-visualization process for the projected content at the University of Toronto neuroscience lab where she worked as a graduate student.

By mounting a variety of bodily tissues like nerves, bone, and gut to slides, staining them with fluorescent antibodies, and then photographing them using a powerful microscope — with the capability to shoot thousands of high-resolution photographs — she was then able to create zooming animations and exploratory paths through them, which she projected onto an outdoor backdrop of trees and foliage, adjusting the palette, speed of movement, and graphic quality to work with the choreography.

The mesmerizing dance choreography focuses on the human movements and actions that underlie the struggle and overcoming that characterized pandemic life.

“The dancers felt slow movements were impactful and helped them connect on a deeper human, kinesthetic level,” says Blumas. “It speaks to the process of emotional trauma moving through the body as well as the mind.”

The dancers, set to Bédard’s moody and brooding music, fall in and out of synchrony, converging and separating — a metaphor for the struggle between body and mind during turmoil and its physiological effects of stress on organs and tissues.

Although COVID-19 has imposed limitations for the last two years, artists like Chaddah and her collaborators continued in adversity to express their observations about the world around them in even more creative ways, says Amirali Alibhai, the Museum’s Head of Performing Arts.

“The digital tools the Museum employed during the pandemic enhanced our ability to communicate to communities locally and globally,” he says. “We’re delighted to be able provide a platform for the *IAM* project, which is finding exciting new ways of presenting stories that speak to the human condition and connect diverse people and culture.”

*IAM: Of Body and Mind* will be viewable as a digital exhibition at [agakhanmuseum.org/IAM](https://agakhanmuseum.org/IAM) from April 22 to May 27, 2022. *Planetary* and *Cosmos*, the final two acts of *IAM* are expected to be launched in December 2022. In 2023, all four acts of *IAM* will be presented together as a 50-minute live outdoor performance by the Museum before going on a national tour, followed by an international tour the next year to Brazil, Japan, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Britain.

## Support

*IAM: Of Body and Mind is* presented by the Aga Khan Museum and Under 5 Studio, with support from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Toronto Arts Council.

### **About Radha Chaddah**

Radha Chaddah is a Toronto-based visual artist and scientist. Born in Owen Sound, Ontario, she studied Film and Art History at Queen's University (BAH) and Human Biology at the University of Toronto, where she received a Master of Science degree in cell and molecular neurobiology. She lectures on cell biology for artists, art students, and the public, at OCADU, the University of Toronto, and the Textile Museum of Canada.

Chaddah makes art about invisible realities like the cellular world and electromagnetic energy, using light as her primary medium. Her work examines the interconnected themes of knowledge, illusion, and material reality. In her studio, she designs projected light installations for public exhibition. In the laboratory, she uses the tools of research science to grow and photograph cells using embedded fluorescent light-emitting molecules. Her photographs and light installations have been exhibited across Canada, and her photographs have appeared in numerous publications. You can view Chaddah's work on [Instagram](#) and on her [website](#).

### **About the Aga Khan Museum**

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Museum's mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage while often reflecting, through both its permanent and temporary exhibitions, how cultures connect with one another. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto's Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

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#### **FOR PRESS INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Jaclyn Blumas**  
PR, Under 5 Studio  
[jacalynie@gmail.com](mailto:jacalynie@gmail.com)  
647.239.2352

**Olena Gisys**  
Porter Novelli  
[Olena.gisys@porternovelli.com](mailto:Olena.gisys@porternovelli.com)  
416-839-8227