

NEWS RELEASE

2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90049-6833

TEL: (310) 440-4500
FAX: (310) 440-4595

E-MAIL: communications@skirball.org
WEBSITE: www.skirball.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 9, 2017

Media Contacts:

Mia Cariño, (310) 440-4544

Elena Bonomo, (310) 440-4578

communications@skirball.org

Skirball Cultural Center presents

FUTURE ALEPPO

May 23–August 18, 2017

FREE admission

**Model city by Syrian boy expresses human capacity
for resilience, hope, and perseverance in times of darkness**

“Glorious.”—The New Yorker

LOS ANGELES, CA—The Skirball Cultural Center announces the first West Coast installation of *Future Aleppo*, a four-by-four-foot model created in Aleppo in 2012–2015 by a young Syrian teen and aspiring architect, Mohammed Qutaish. As he witnessed his beloved city being demolished in an indiscriminately violent war, Mohammed began to craft his vision for the future of Aleppo using paper, wood, old toys, colored pencils, and glue. Every day for three years—as bombs fell and people were forced to stay indoors—Mohammed headed to a safe room in a neighbor’s house to build the model. It featured not only reconstructed fallen landmarks, like the medieval Citadel and Mohammed’s favorite park, but also new structures and amenities that he felt would improve the war-torn city, such as gardens, rooftop pools, bridges, roads, solar panels, and helicopter pads. Brought from Aleppo for public exhibition, *Future Aleppo* now serves as a powerful symbol of imagination and perseverance in the face of tragedy and destruction. It will be on view at the Skirball from May 23 to August 18, 2017; admission is free.

The installation makes its way to the Skirball via curator Alex Kalman, a cofounder of the New York museum Mmuseumm. Kalman first learned of the model from watching a video created by Syrian citizen journalist Waad Alkateab, a neighbor of Mohammed. With the help of volunteers from several countries along the way, Kalman and Alkateab transported a portion of the model from Aleppo to New York City, where Mmuseumm organized its first public display in 2016. When the Qutaish family later fled to Turkey, the remainder of the original model was left behind, where it was presumably destroyed. Today, Mohammed continues to expand his work as his family makes plans to relocate to Europe or Canada.

“I began building my model after I experienced my city being destroyed by airstrikes and missiles,” explained the teen, who has lived one-third of his life in a war that has left more than 400,000 people dead and some eleven million more displaced. “My sorrow, caused by this destruction, has inspired me immensely.”

“Sometimes I feel very frightened,” he continued. “Sometimes I cannot think or work. Optimism gives me the power and determination to finish the works I have started.... I hope that one day these paper buildings will become real buildings.”

Kalman remarked, “Mohammed’s colorful model takes the first step toward overcoming a brutal war: seeing beyond the violence and laying down a vision for a city one day rebuilt. It is a powerful example of the human capacity to persevere in times of darkness, one that is important to share with the public.”

Cate Thurston, Skirball curator and member of the Skirball’s Public Engagement team, added, “We are honored to exhibit *Future Aleppo* at the Skirball, where our visitors of all ages will have the opportunity to experience Mohammed’s hope and imagination—and consider one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our times from a unique perspective.”

FUTURE ALEPPO WAS CREATED BY MOHAMMED QUTAISH, 2012-2015, IN ALEPPO, SYRIA, AND CURATED BY ALEX KALMAN. THE INSTALLATION WAS ORIGINALLY ORGANIZED AT MMUSEUM IN NEW YORK.

About the Skirball

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

Visiting the Skirball

The Skirball Cultural Center is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday 12:00–5:00 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays. Admission to *Future Aleppo* is FREE. Admission to all other exhibitions: \$12 General; \$9 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$7 Children 2–12, and FREE to Skirball Members and Children under 2. All exhibitions are FREE to all visitors on Thursdays. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit skirball.org.