

Bullets Revisited #3



## Bullets Revisited #3, 2012

### Beauty and the East

Moroccan-born **Lalla Essaydi (b. 1956)** questions stereotypes imposed on her by West and East. Her depictions challenge voyeuristic male fantasies of seductive nudes prominent in 19th-century Western painting. Equally, they address gender issues in Islamic culture.

### Take a closer look

Consider the artwork from afar. Move closer. The shimmering, mosaic-like backdrop resolves into its component parts—polished bullet casings. For Essaydi, these evoke violence and reference her fears about growing restrictions on women in the Arab world.

### In her own words

“Beauty is quite dangerous, as it lures the viewer into accepting the fantasy.”

### Who knew?

Essaydi uses henna to write stream-of-consciousness Arabic calligraphy on her models. Henna painting—applying patterns on women’s skin for major life events—is a female tradition. Calligraphy, on the other hand, is a male practice. The artist subverts gender norms by merging art forms.

Lalla Essaydi, *Bullets Revisited #3*, 2012; Three chromogenic prints mounted to aluminum, 66 x 150 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Purchased with funds provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars, Sunny Scully Alsup and William Alsup, Mr. Sharad Tak and Mrs. Mahinder Tak, Marcia and Frank Carlucci, and Nancy Nelson Stevenson; © Lalla Essaydi

