





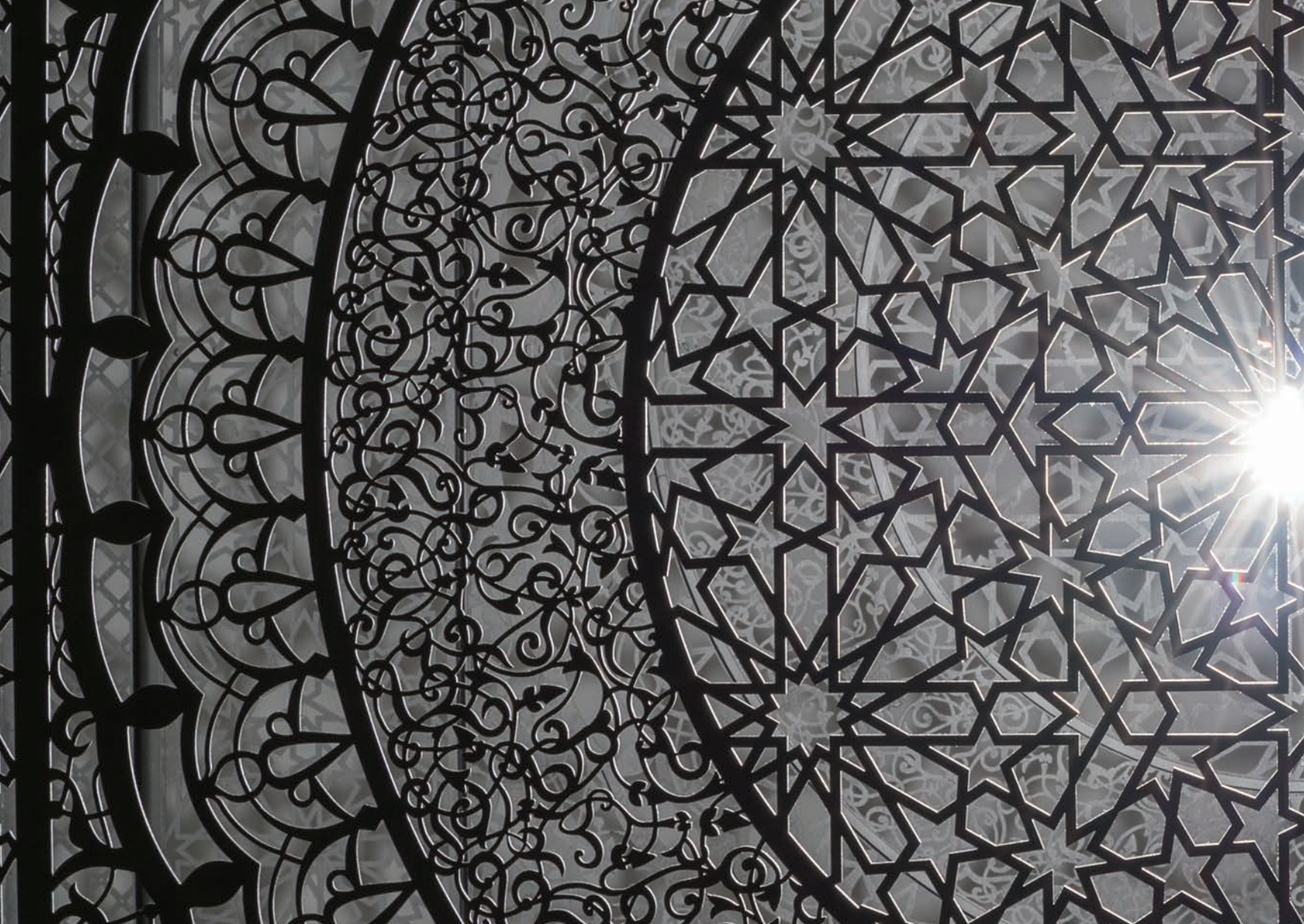


24 SEPTEMBER - 6 DECEMBER 2015

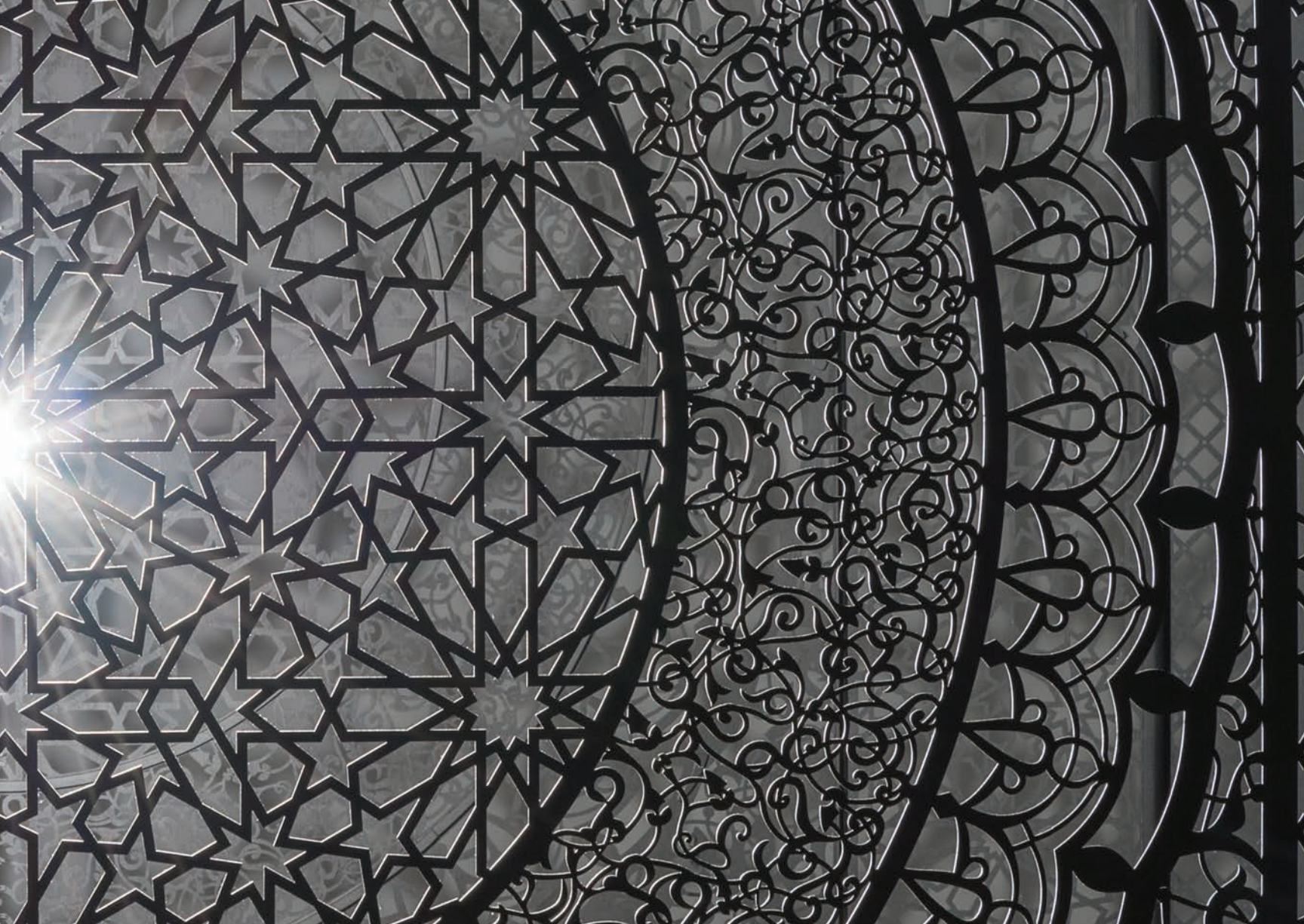
ANILA QUAYYUM AGHA  
I N T E R S E C T I O N S

**Rice Gallery**













ANILA QUAYYUM AGHA

# INTERSECTION

24 SEPTEMBER – 6 DECEMBER 2015

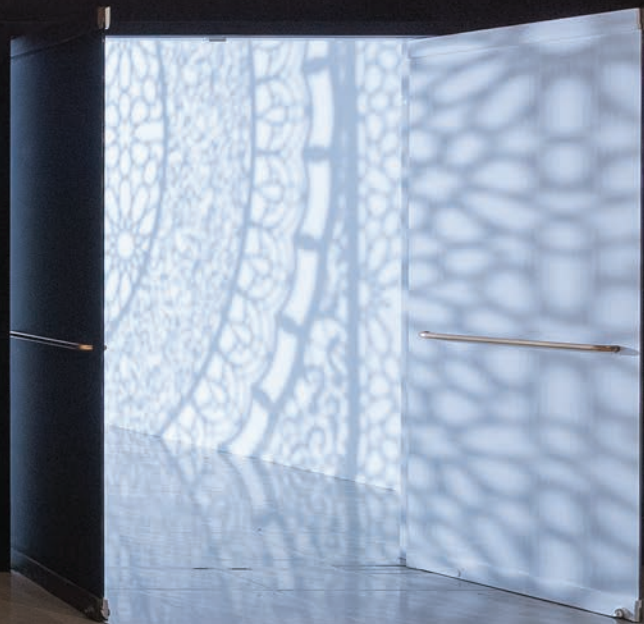
← ENTER

WELCOME TO  
**Rice Gallery**



NS

ENTER →



## FOREWORD

Throughout the time *Intersections* was on view, it was not unusual to see people quickly walking through Rice Gallery's foyer space to class or a meeting abruptly stop and do a double take when they caught a glimpse through the gallery's open door. Pakistani-American artist Anila Quayyum Agha used light and cast shadow to transform Rice Gallery into a place that alluded to Islamic sacred spaces dense with geometric ornamentation and pattern. *Intersections* was inspired by Agha's visit to the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, a UNESCO World Heritage site where every surface is covered with the complex, interlacing designs of Islamic art. The beauty of the decoration caused Agha to reflect upon her childhood in Lahore, Pakistan where culture dictated that women



were excluded from the mosque, a place of creativity and community, and instead prayed at home. Through her Alhambra experience, she says, she “discovered the complex expressions of both wonder and exclusion that had been my experience while growing up.”

Agha translated these contradictory feelings into *Intersections* by creating a contemplative space of her own making and having it be open to all. Created as a site-specific installation for the Grand Rapids Museum of Art and the city’s independently organized Art Prize competition, *Intersections* uses simple means to dramatic

effect: a single, bright light suspended from the ceiling shines through an intricately laser-cut box made from wood and painted black. Each side of this cube is the same, repeating a symmetrical pattern Agha designed by combining and adapting different decorative elements she saw at the Alhambra. The geometric shapes and lines become shadows that cover the gallery walls, floor, and ceiling, and even gallery visitors, so that no clear boundary or separation exists. Viewers’ moving bodies change the nature of the pattern as they walk freely through the installation’s dense silhouette.

I am grateful to Anila Agha for the opportunity to bring her beautiful and enigmatic installation to Rice Gallery. Her impulse to create this work tapped into a deep desire for many to connect to a culture that is often misrepresented and misunderstood, and to open up room for conversation about personal experiences. We were fortunate to have the assistance of Steve Prachyl, Anila’s engineer (and now husband!), to uncrate and install the delicate wooden cube that is *Intersections*’ central element.

*Intersections* effectively raised larger questions about issues of gender politics and religion that were explored in Rice Gallery’s Professors’ Perspectives series supported by Rice’s Boniuk Institute for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance. I thank Betty Joseph, Associate Professor of English; Elora Shehabuddin, Associate Professor of Humanities and



Political Science; and Aimée E. Froom, Curator of Islamic Art at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, all of whom drew from their respective areas of expertise to address the installation's layers of cultural and art historical meaning.

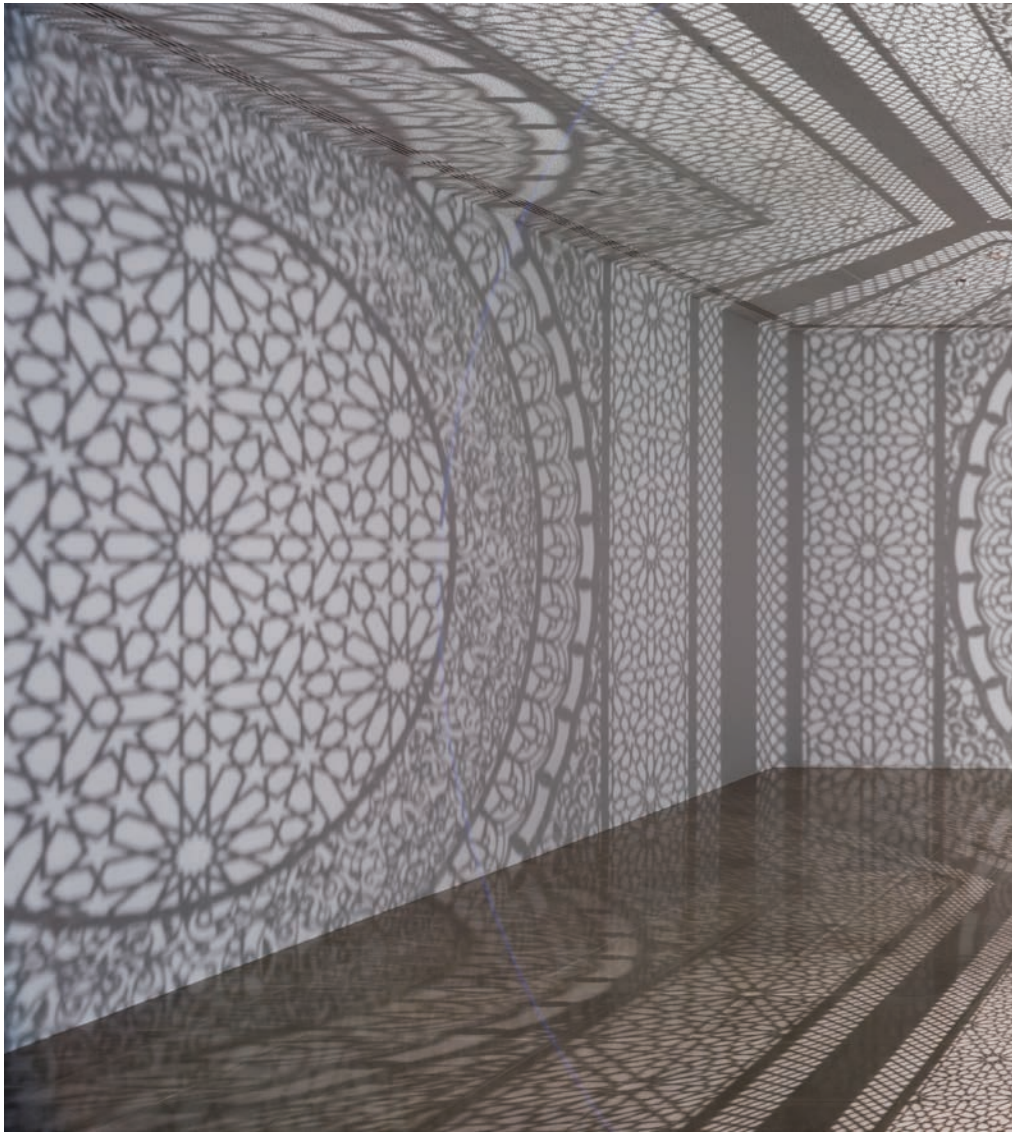
Mark and Angela Walley of Walley Films awed us once again with their amazing video about *Intersections* at Rice Gallery that captured Agha's intentions and the installation's powerful effect. To date, the short video has been viewed by nearly 100,000 people online at vimeo.com. It has been featured as a Vimeo Staff Pick, an Editors' Pick by *The Atlantic* magazine, and included in the *National Geographic* Short Film Showcase.

I thank artist and writer Mary Wemple for organizing writing workshops based on *Intersections* that culminated in Words & Art, an evening reading of original poetry and prose inspired by Agha's installation. Students from Rice's Shepherd School of Music composed and performed works in response to *Intersections* for Rice Gallery's New Art / New Music. Organized by Charlotte Nicholas and Clare Monfredo, this 13th performance in the series was electric with a standing-room-only audience bathed in *Intersections*' shadows.

Social media, word of mouth, and photographer Nash Baker's stunning images of *Intersections* brought over one thousand people to campus see the installation during its final weekend on view, setting a new Rice Gallery record. Since then, *Intersections* has traveled to significant venues including the Sharjah Contemporary Art Museum in the United Arab Emirates and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, bringing to each place Anila Quayyum Agha's idea of wonder and access for all.

Kimberly Davenport  
Director

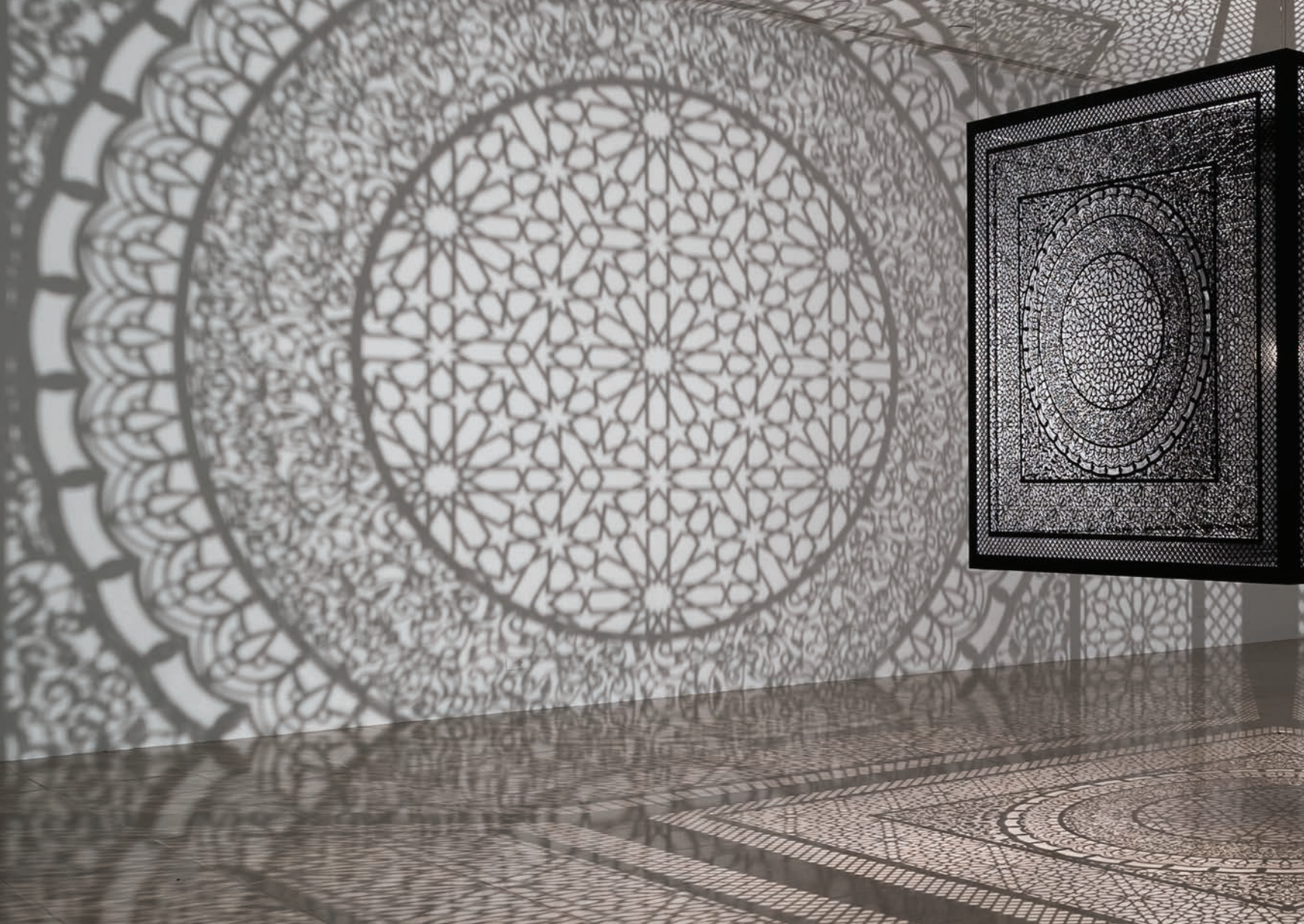




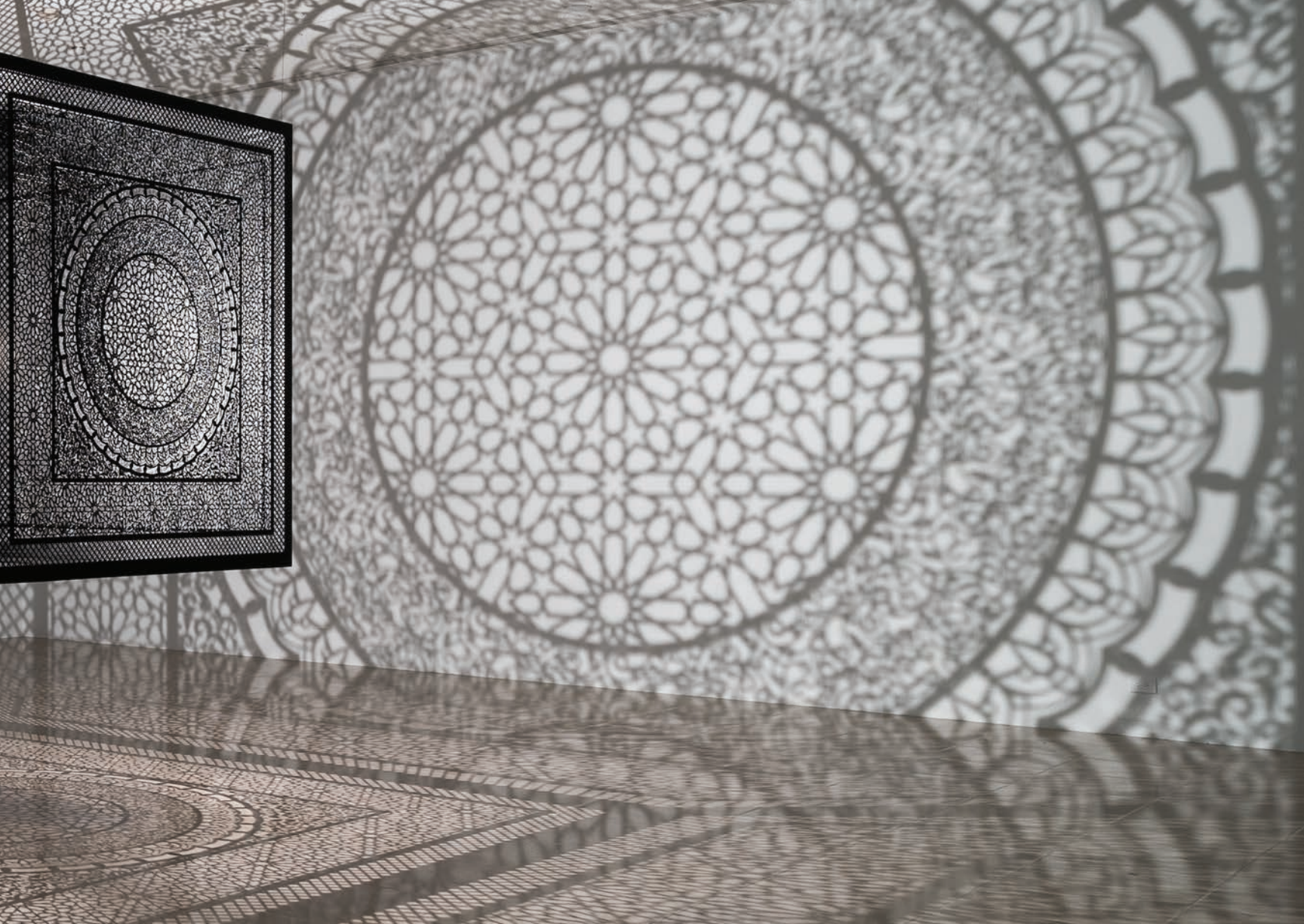




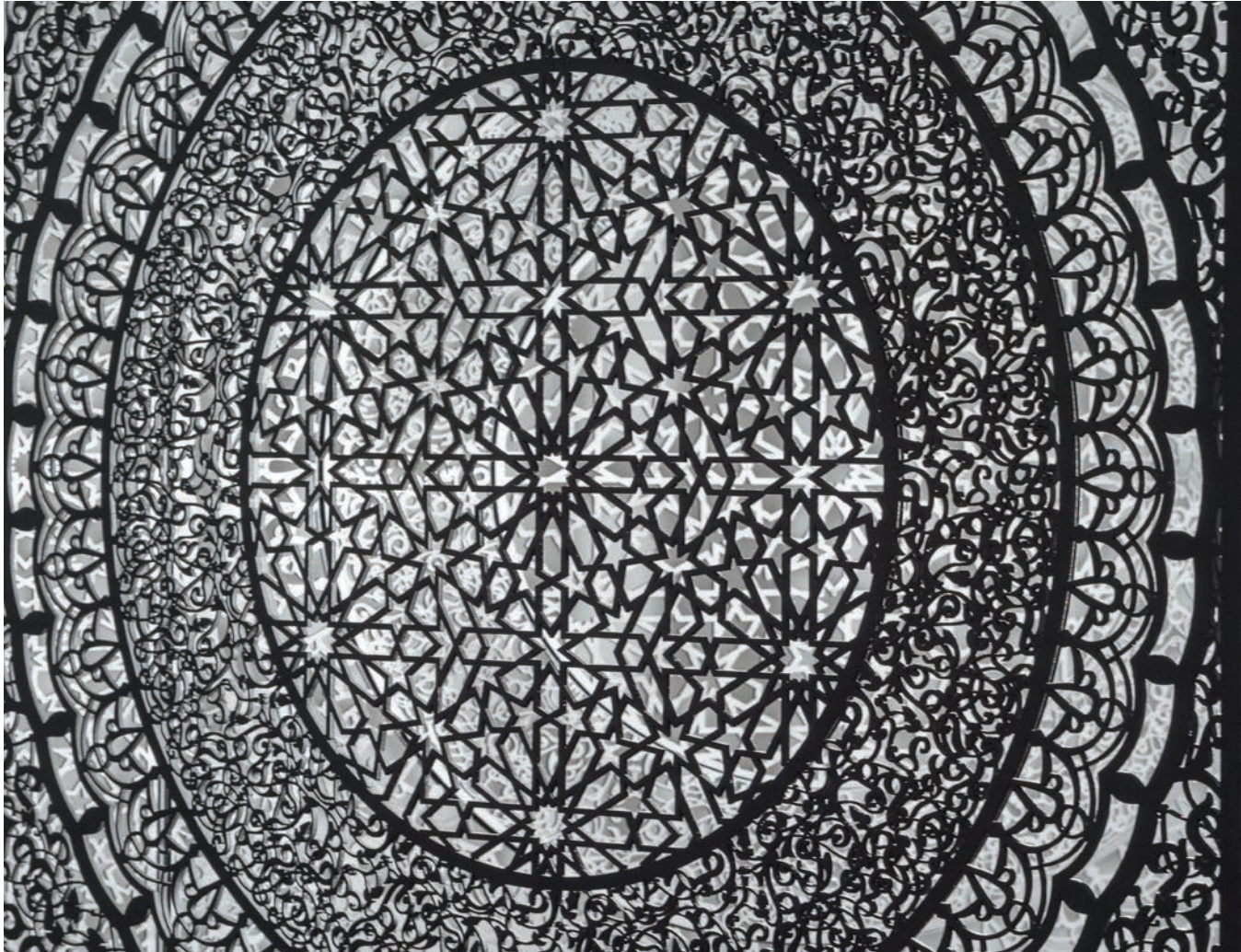




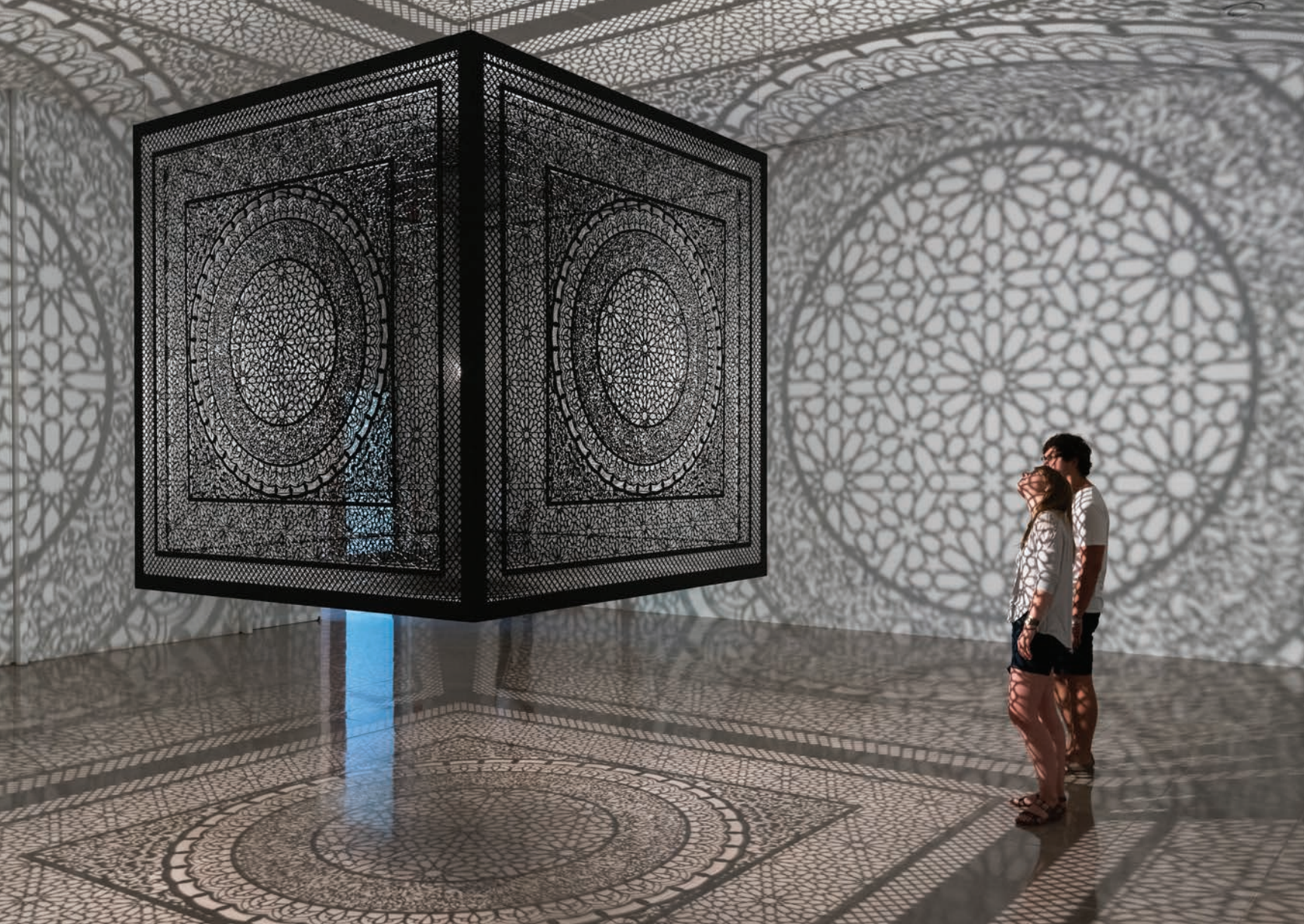




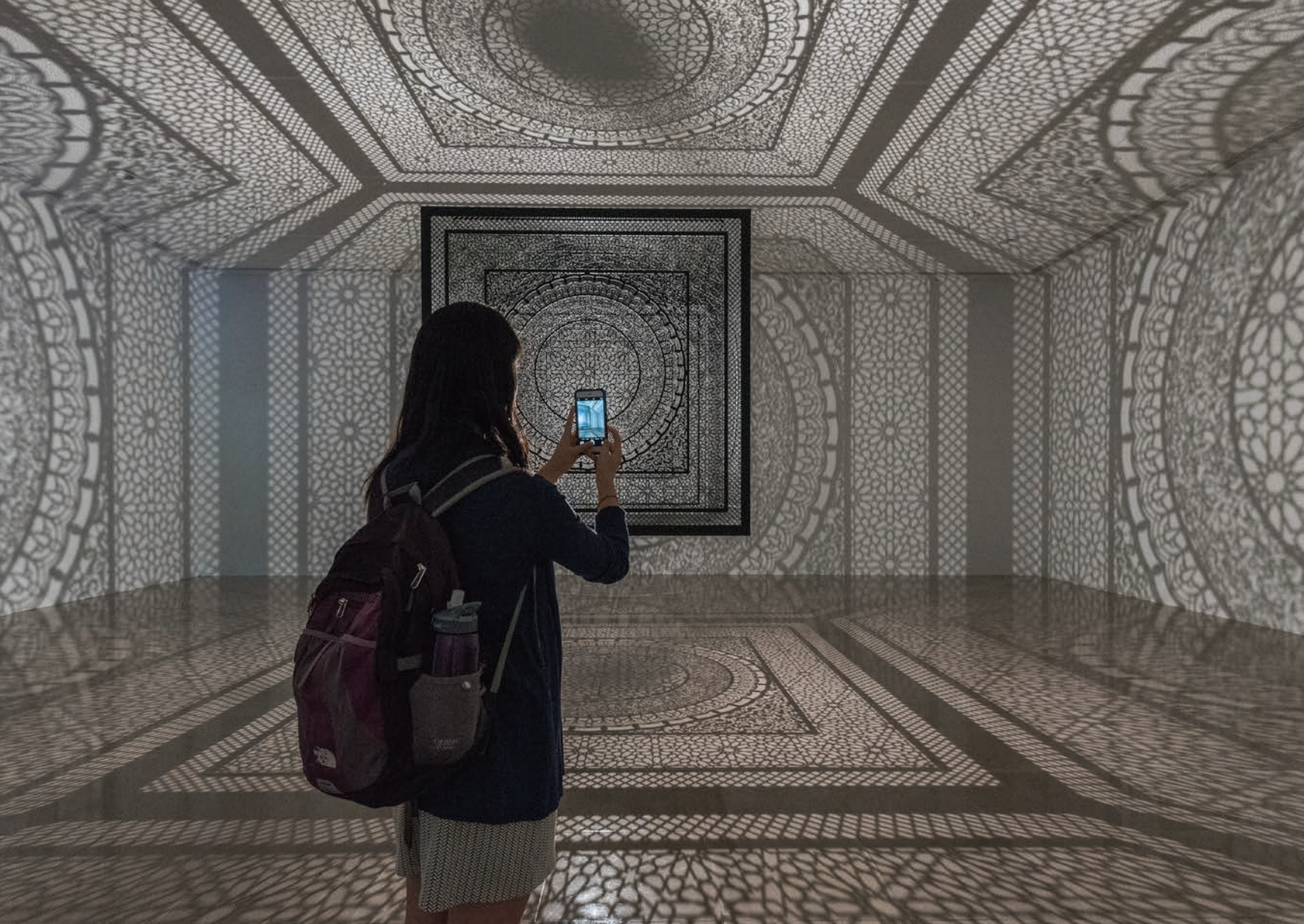




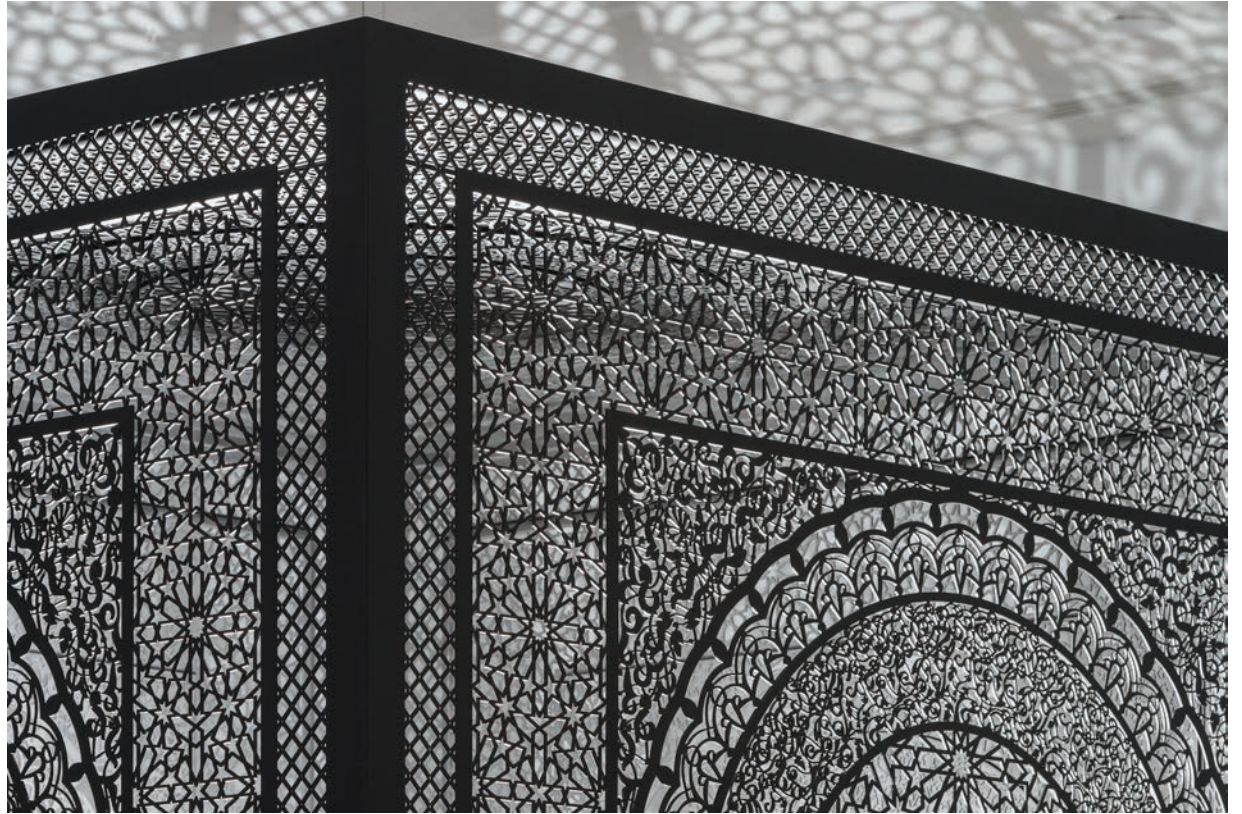












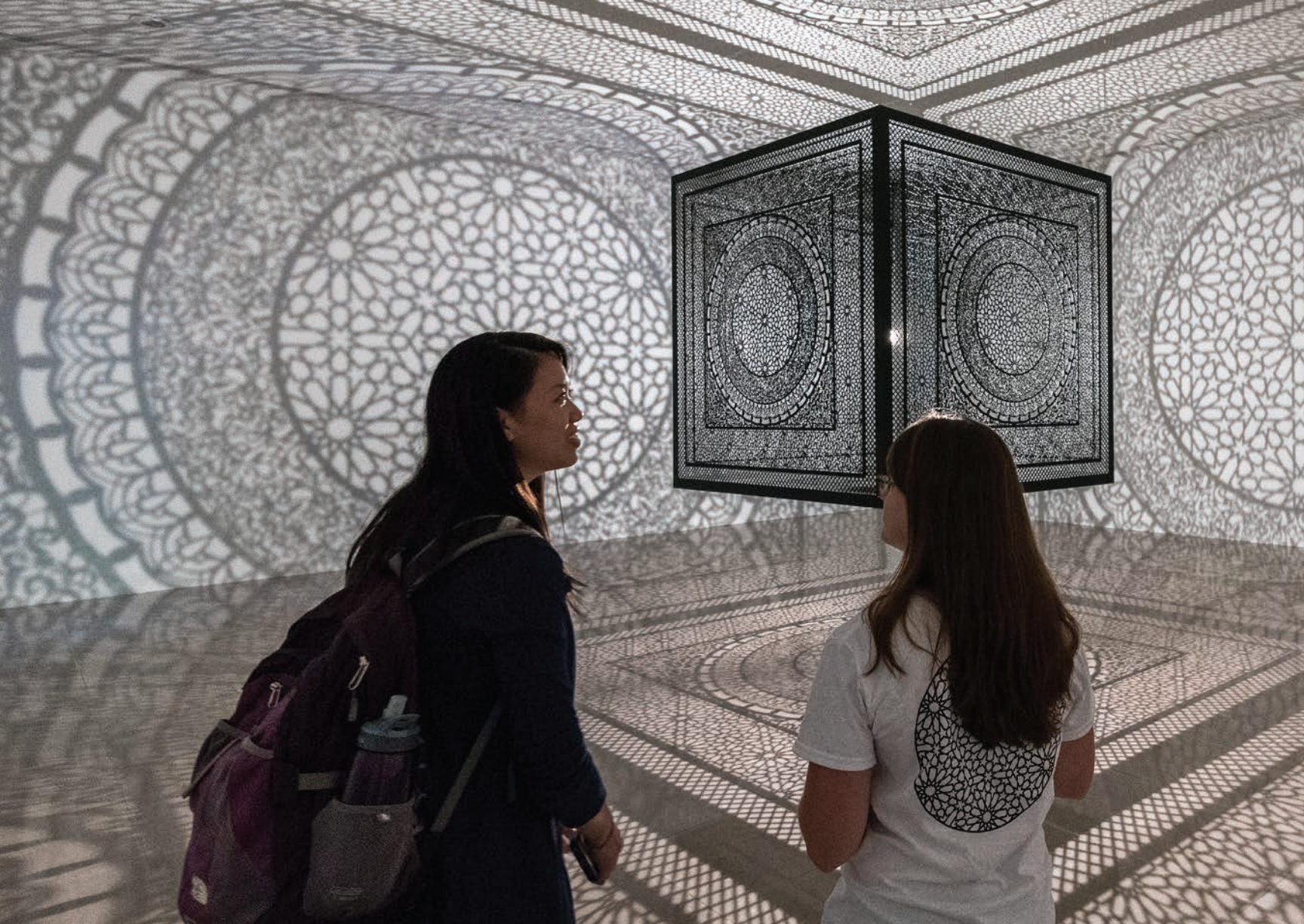




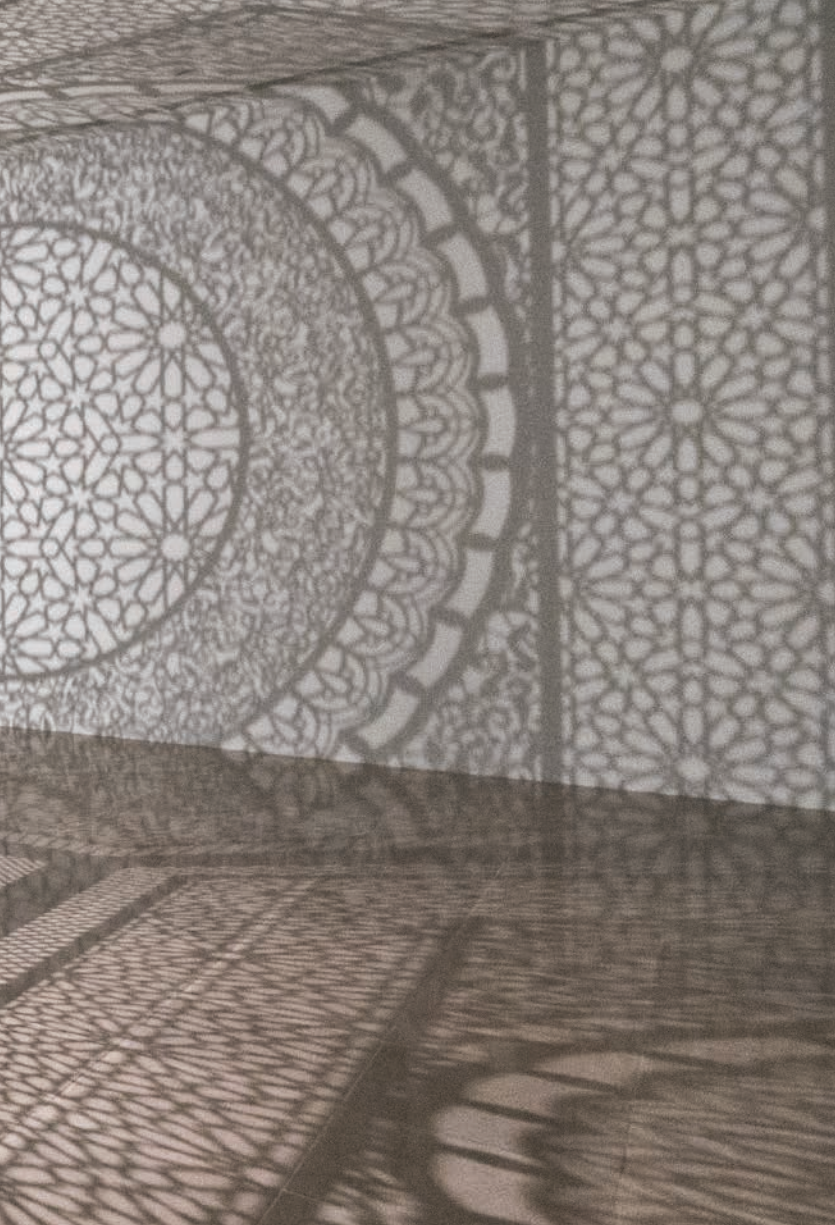


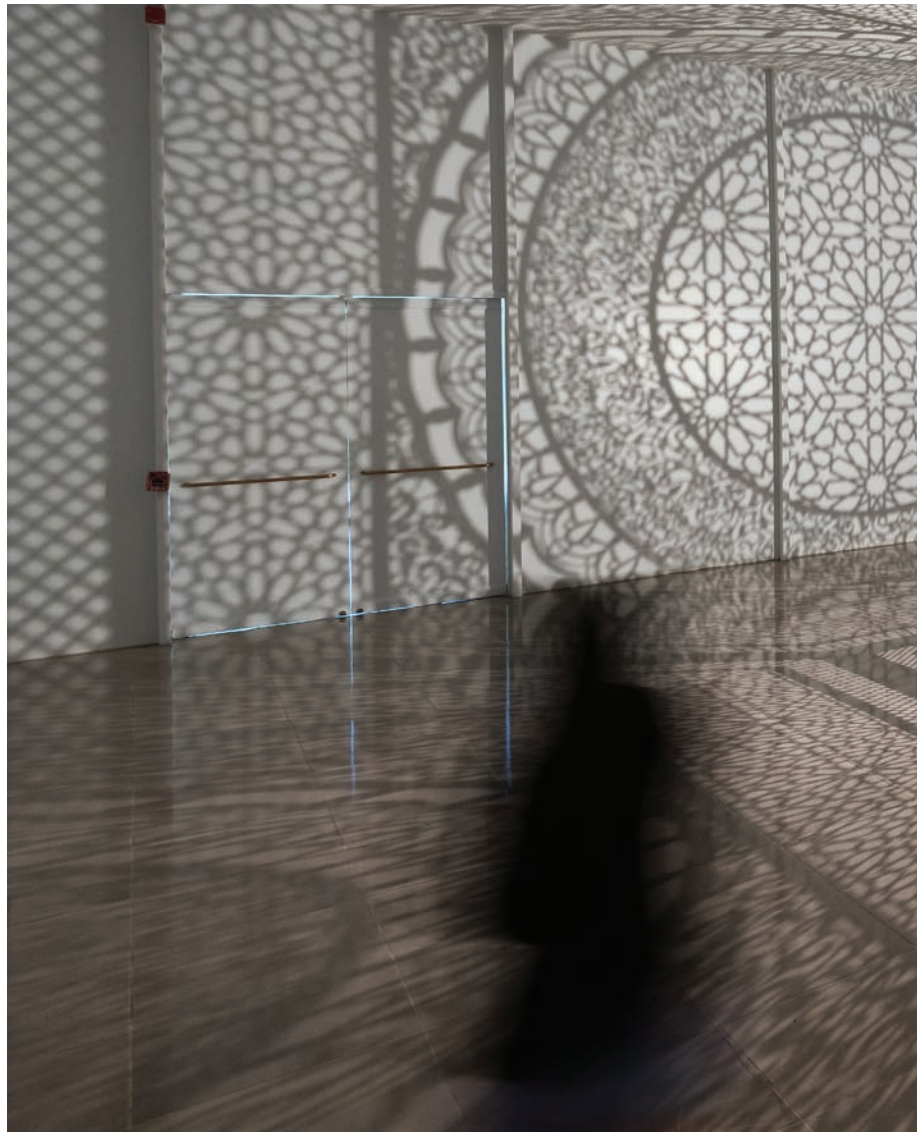




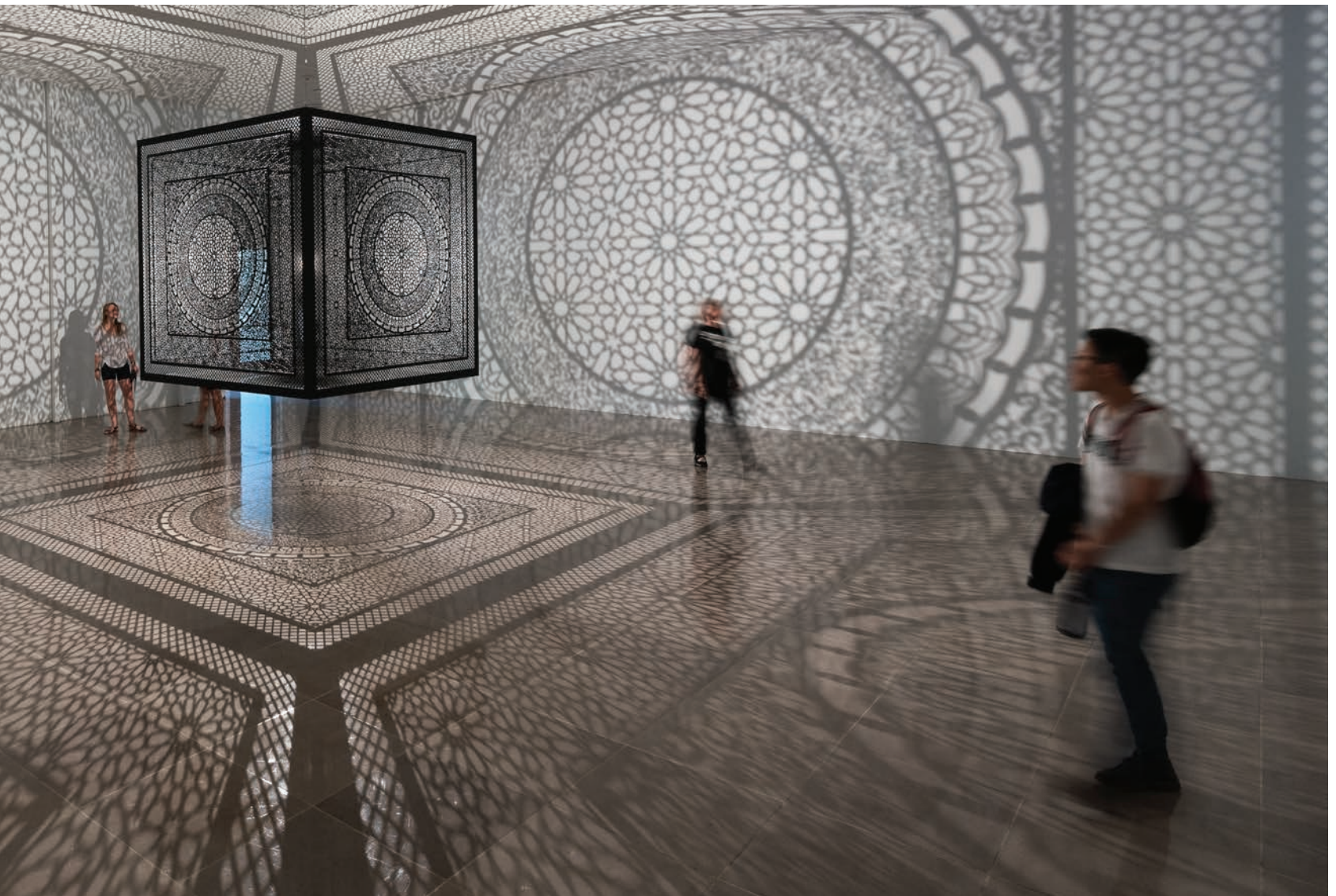




















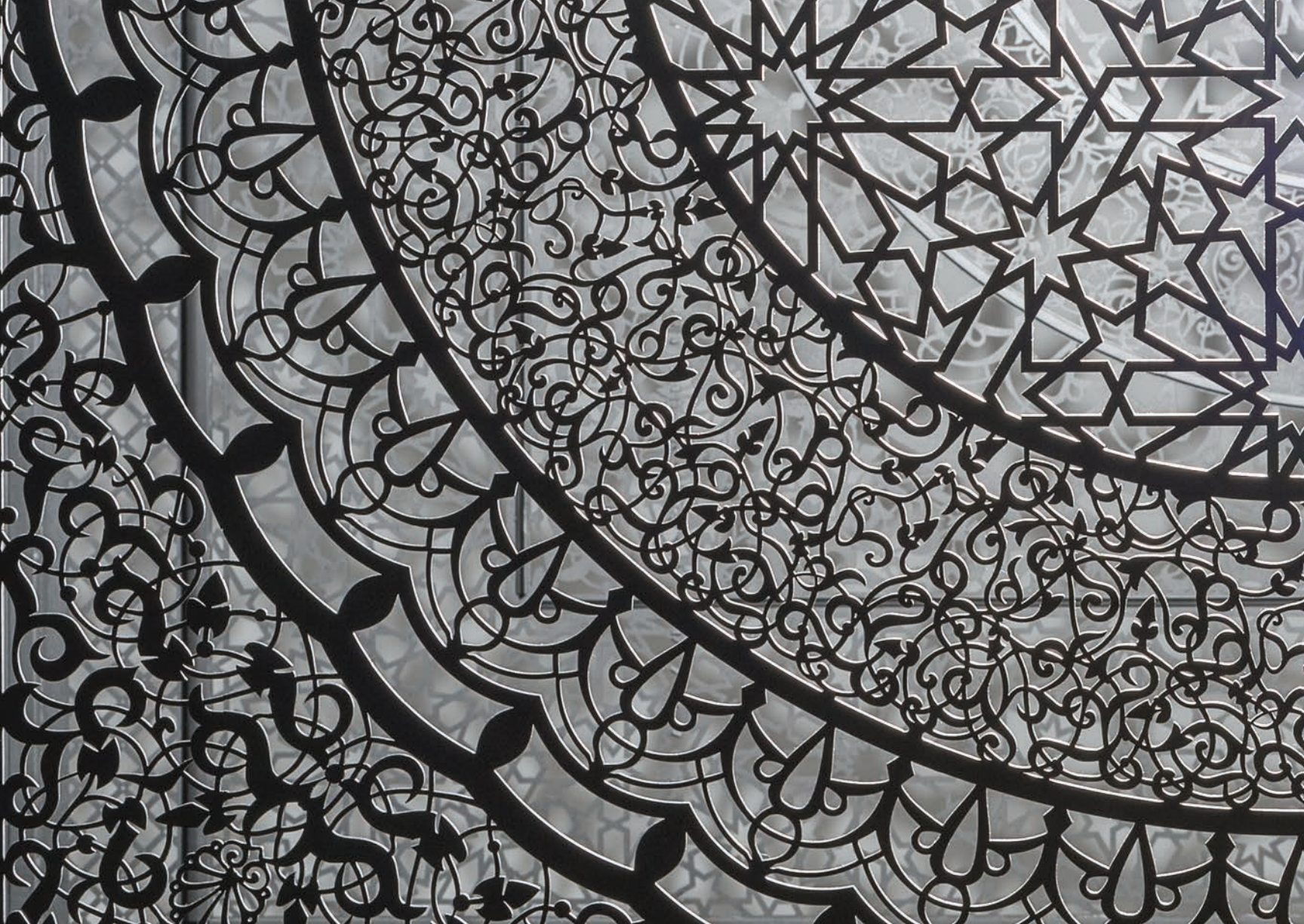








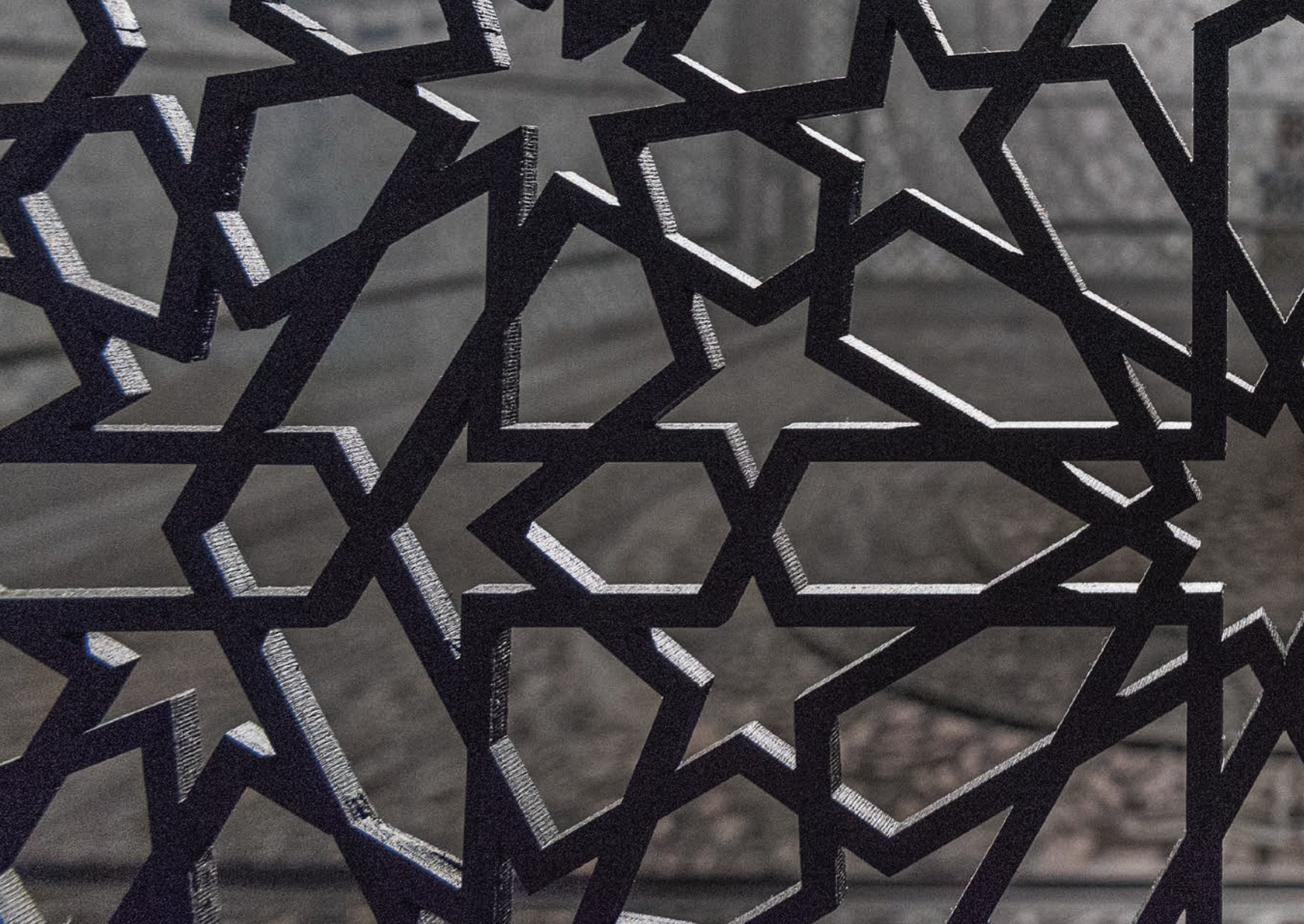












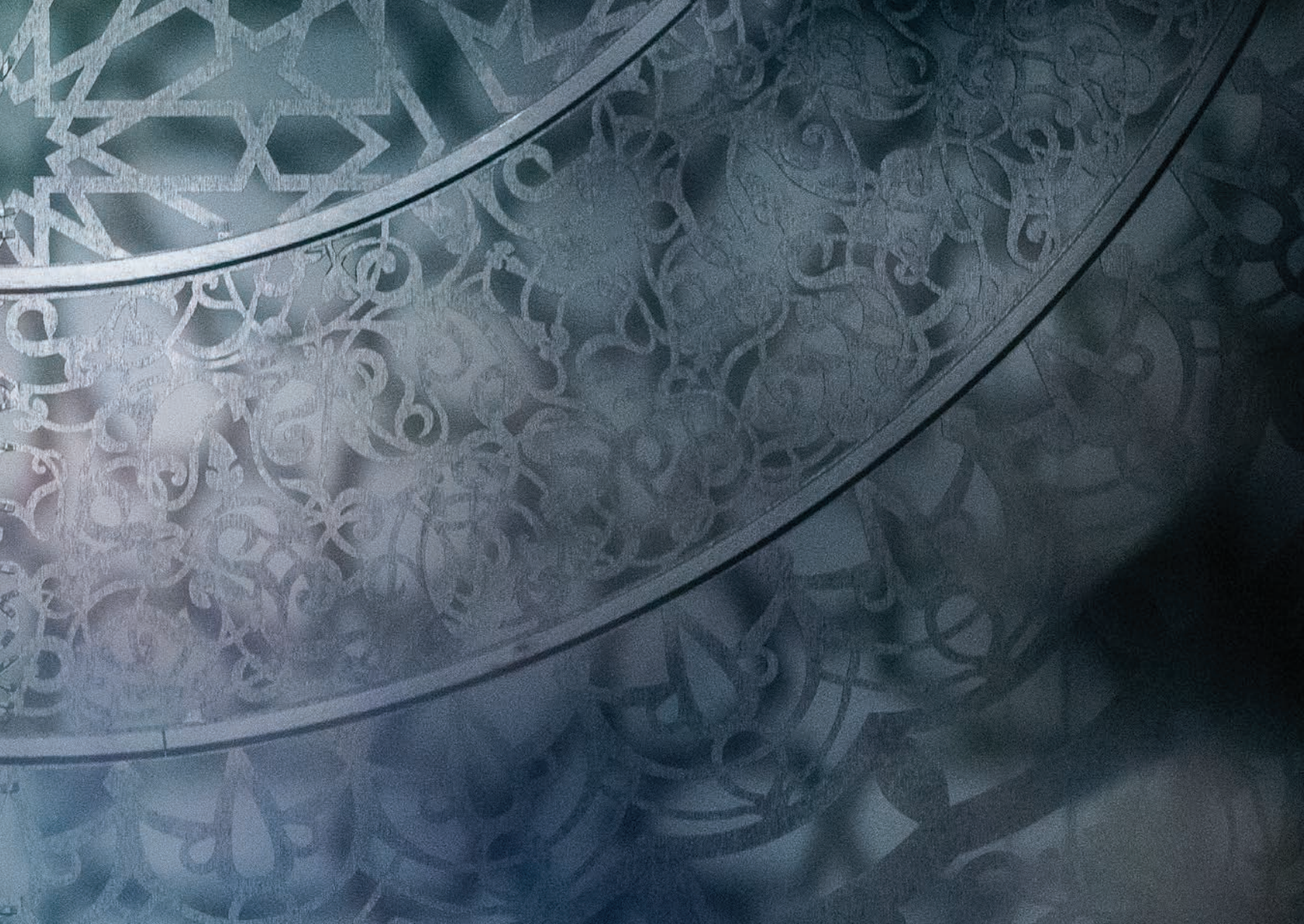
















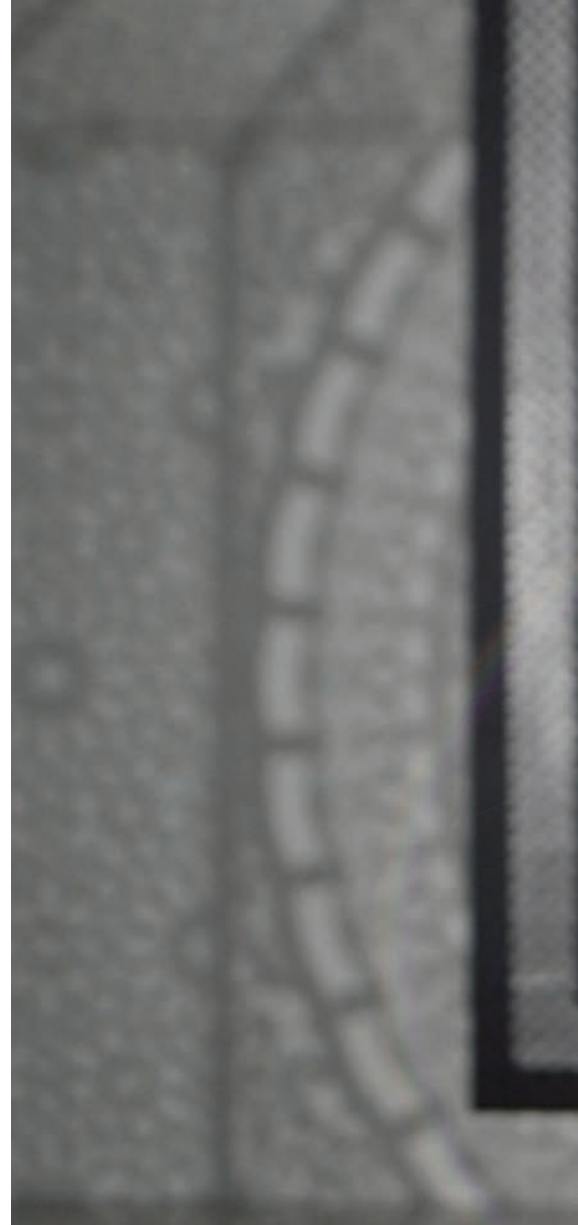






## ABOUT THE ARTIST

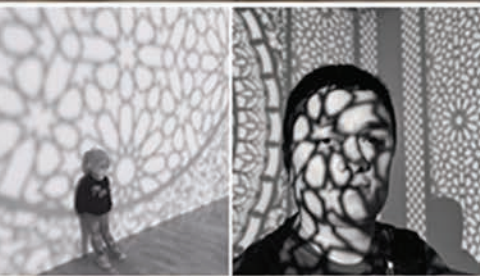
Anila Quayyum Agha was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1965. She received her BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore, and an MFA in Fiber Arts from the University of North Texas in 2001. She has had solo exhibitions in the United States, United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan. Residencies and awards include the New Frontiers Exploratory Research Grant, Indiana University (2013); New Frontiers Travel Grants to Mazatlan, Mexico (2012), Spain (2011), and Pakistan (2010); and a Houston Center for Contemporary Craft residency (2005). *Intersections* was awarded the Public Vote Grand Prize and split the Juried Grand Prize in a tie at the 2014 ArtPrize competition in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Agha is currently an associate professor of drawing at the Herron School of Art & Design at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.













Anila Quayyum Agha, *Intersections*, 2013  
Site-specific installation, Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, Texas  
24 September - 6 December 2015

*Intersections* was originally presented at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan as an entry in the 2014 ArtPrize competition.

Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and online at [ricegallery.org](http://ricegallery.org).

Rice University Art Gallery Patrons provide major funding for exhibitions. Additional support comes from Rice Gallery Members; The Brown Foundation, Inc.; the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment; and the Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist Residency Endowment. The Gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston; KUHF-FM and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind contributions.

All photographs except as noted © Nash Baker 2015

Page 37, Video still from *Anila Agha: Intersections* by Walley Films

Page 38, Various public posts from Instagram

Rice University Art Gallery Staff  
Kimberly Davenport, Director  
Christine Medina, Manager  
Joshua Fischer, Curator  
David Krueger, Preparator

Printing: Specialty Bindery and Printing, Houston, Texas

Copyright © 2017 Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, Texas

ISBN: 1-932281-52-5







