

**Rarely Exhibited Photojournalist Franco Pagetti's Haunting Images Reveal the  
Devastation of a Once-Vibrant City**

***Veiled Aleppo* Examines Effects of Syrian Civil War in one of the Nation's Largest Cities**

**WORCESTER, MA – September 21, 2015** – The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) examines the devastating effects of the Syrian civil war in *Veiled Aleppo*, an exhibition of a series of color photographs by Italian photojournalist Franco Pagetti. Opening on September 23, the exhibition reveals Aleppo's ruined streets and abandoned neighborhoods after years of continued conflict. These unpopulated photographs feature sheets hanging on clotheslines, a seemingly-benign symbol that is charged with significance, as the sheets help obscure civilian Free Syrian Army soldiers from President Bashar al-Assad's security snipers. On view through June 5, 2016, *Veiled Aleppo* continues WAM's series of exhibitions exploring areas of conflict and the work of photographers who are bringing visibility to those affected.

“We are dedicated to exhibiting works of art from around the world that address contemporary events, and it is within the context of our encyclopedic institution—with a collection spanning time and place—that we encourage visitors from all backgrounds to engage meaningfully with this powerful body of work,” said Director of Curatorial Affairs and organizing curator Jon Seydl. “Franco Pagetti's photographs simultaneously educate and inspire empathy in viewers for populations that are often left voiceless. We are grateful to offer our visitors the rare opportunity to experience his work in a museum setting and to reflect on their gripping imagery.”

The Syrian Civil War began in 2011 in the nation's largest cities of Aleppo and Damascus, evolving from nationwide protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government to armed rebellion following his regime's repeatedly violent response to civic unrest. The armed citizens fighting are comprised of various groups and militias, primarily the Free Syrian Army, and are unmatched against the government's resources. The United Nations and a number of international humanitarian organizations have outlined the war crimes of the Syrian government against its people, including massacres, the use of chemical weapons, torture, and bombings. Now in its fourth year, the war's death toll is above 300,000, with over 7.6 million Syrians displaced, 4 million fled, and millions living with limited food and water.

The *Veiled Aleppo* series consists of eight photographs taken by Pagetti in Aleppo in 2013, and documents Aleppo's devastation at the war's outbreak. Deserted streets are lined with flimsy walls of hanging sheets; once used for privacy from neighbors or protection from changing weather, they offer limited safety from government snipers. To move throughout the city, citizens must know the direction of the wind and the position of their shadow, or the sheets quickly reveal their presence. Pagetti's photographs depict abandoned buses and debris piles being used as barricades, and buildings' windows shattered with destroyed balcony railings. As *Veiled Aleppo* reveals, the only color to be found in the once-vibrant city is in the hanging sheets among the rubble.

Born in Varese, Italy in 1950, Pagetti studied chemistry in Milan, eventually working in the University of Milan's chemistry department. In 1980, he began a career in fashion photography, working primarily with *Vogue Italia* and *L'Uomo Vogue*. Pagetti's first photojournalist pursuit came in 1988, documenting women tortured by the Chilean dictatorship. In 1997, Pagetti left the world of fashion to become a full-time photojournalist, citing a moral responsibility he felt to record injustice. Primarily known for his photographs of the Iraq war on assignment from *TIME* magazine in Baghdad, his work offers the most comprehensive look at the crisis, as it documents the outbreak of war, the downfall of Saddam Hussein, and the rise of insurgent terrorist groups. In addition to *TIME*, he has traveled on assignment for *The New York Times* and the *New Yorker*, and his images have been published in *Le Figaro*, *Paris Match*, the *Times of London*, and the *Independent*, among others.

**ABOUT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM:**

Founded in 1898, the Worcester Art Museum serves Worcester and the broader region. The Museum houses an encyclopedic collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media. WAM's collection has historically been strongest in European Renaissance paintings, but with recent acquisitions and donations, like Veronese's *Venus Disarming Cupid* and the integration of the collection from the Higgins Armory Museum, it continues to diversify and expand its curatorial and programmatic offerings. Symbolized by the opening of the Salisbury Street doors in 2012, the Museum continues toward its goal of accessibility for all visitors.

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