



The River That Was in the South, still image, 5 minutes, 2019

SADIK KWAISH ALFRAJI

THE RIVER THAT WAS IN THE SOUTH

12 March – 25 April 2019

Opening reception: Tuesday, 12 March 2019

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *The River That Was in the South*, a solo exhibition of Sadik Kwaish Alfraji presenting his latest works.

Artist Statement

These are visions coming from afar, from a generation I haven't seen, and a life I haven't lived, yet I grew up in the arms of its legacy.

It is my grandfather's generation who lived suspended between his own Southern heaven and the toll of its existence.

There, where the fistful power of feudalism and misery, where the beauty of life mixed up with cruelty bred an endless vortex of dreams and nightmares.

To overcome their wasted dreams and the phantoms of agony and loss; sorrow and grief would identify their world and encompass their perception of things, becoming a feature of their existence.

And with a devotion that is a mixture of lust for life and abstemiousness, they are to create songs of sorrow and tales where happiness takes the colour of grief and where anguish is replaced with joy, where reality blends with the myth with words of agony, love, yearnings, partings, desolation, death and the absence of justice.

A generation living in that paradise of the South, yet unable to own their life nor their fates, in spite of all the efforts and aspirations, ending up carrying their songs and stories, their dreams and fears, leaving behind the crops and reed houses to migrate. In hope of finding a better life.

The dream of migration always seems rosy.

And the paths of migration glisten like gold painting a bright horizon. It would be followed with devotion not knowing that they would end up living on the brinks of the cities.

A migration that would have lasted for three generations, burdened with the same misery and loss.

Eternal migrants standing on the verge of cities carrying the same passion.

And I stand here with the same passion - on the side of the canals in Amsterdam - viewing the paths of departure, listening to the murmur of the streams stretching down to that southern land, carrying me to that slim snaky river of Rfayaah, wandering along the marshes and on its way watering the songs of love and hope, fading after a while, leaving but drought, absence and separation behind.

These works are an attempt to touch the visions of those migrants and those of us, "We" who are still on the move, driven by our everlasting yearnings to visualize a heaven we shall forever stand on its edges.

About the Artist

Sadik Kwaish Alfraji explores what he describes as 'the problem of existence' through drawings, paintings, video animations, art books, graphic art, and installations. The shadowy protagonist who often appears in Alfraji's multimedia works represents a black void, a filter that allows him to explore the intricacies of life. By rendering his solitary character as a charcoal-coloured silhouette and minimising the formal properties of his compositions, Alfraji captures the expressed movements and subtle inflections of the body in psychologically laden environments. The artist often records his own narrative in black and white scenes of this recurring figure, particularly the loss, fragmentation, and lapses in time that underline exile.

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1960, Sadik Kwaish Alfraji lives and works in Amersfoort, Netherlands. He received a Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting and Plastic Art from the Academy of Fine Arts, Baghdad in 1987 and a High Diploma in Graphic Design from CHK Constantijn Huygens, Netherlands in 2000.

The artist's solo shows include Casa Arabe, Madrid (2018), Maraya Art Centre

(2017); Red Star Line Museum, Belgium (2016); Galerie Tanit, Munich (2016); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2015); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2015); Beirut Exhibition Center (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2015, 2013); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Stads Gallery, Amersfoort, Netherlands (2010); Station Museum, Houston (2008); Stedelijk Museum, Den Bosch (2007). Selected group exhibitions include 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (2018); the Iraq Pavilion of the 57th Venice Biennale (2017); British Museum, London (2017); TRIO Biennial, Rio de Janeiro (2015); P21 Gallery, London (2015); the British Museum, London (2015); 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); Abu Dhabi Festival, Abu Dhabi (2015); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2015); LACMA, Los Angeles (2015); FotoFest Biennial, Houston (2014); Samsung Blue Square and Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2014); Ikono On Air Festival, online and broadcasted (2013); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Institut du Monde Arabe (2012); and Centro Cultural General San Martin, Buenos Aires (2012).

Alfraji's works are housed in private and public collections including the British Museum, London; LACMA, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Berjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Novosibirsk State Art Museum, Russia; Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman; and The National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad.

A monograph on the artist edited by Nat Mueller was published in 2015 (Schilt Publishing, Amsterdam).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts program have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibitions Dates: 12 March - 25 April, 2019

Opening Reception: Tuesday, 12 March from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun – Thur: 10 am – 6 pm, Sat: 12 – 6 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery B11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al-Quoz, Dubai

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