

WALID SITI LAND ON FIRE

16 JULY – 4 AUGUST, MEET THE ARTIST: 16 JULY, 3-4PM

LAND ON FIRE IS AN EXHIBITION OF RECENT DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS BY WALID SITI, AN IRAQI-KURDISH PAINTER AND PRINTMAKER NOW BASED IN BRITAIN.

SITI'S SUBJECTS ARE HIS EXPERIENCES OF WAR, EXILE, PAIN AND LOSS. IN HIS HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL, STYLISED IMAGES, RENDERED IN MUTED, SOMBRE TONES, HE PORTRAYS SYMBOLS AND FORMS SUCH AS STONES, FIRE, CUBES AND CIRCLES THAT EXPRESS HIS QUEST FOR INNER PEACE.

LAND ON FIRE COMPRISES IMAGES FROM TWO RECENT BODIES OF WORK, FAMILY TIES AND PRECIOUS STONES.

IN FAMILY TIES, SITI EXPLORES THE CONTRADICTIONARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP IDENTITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE FAMILY, TRIBAL OR NATIONAL HONOUR CAN TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS. THIS CAN SERVE EITHER AS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND COMFORT FOR GROUP MEMBERS OR IT CAN BE RESTRICTIVE TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S FREEDOM AND ASPIRATIONS. FAMILY TIES ARE THEREFORE BOTH A BOND AND A CONFLICT.

IN PRECIOUS STONES, SITI HIGHLIGHTS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STONES AND ROCKS TO THE KURDISH PEOPLE. STONES REPRESENT THE MOUNTAINS, WHICH THEY REGARD AS THEIR ONLY FRIENDS, AND THE STONE OF MECCA, TOWARDS WHICH THIS PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM PEOPLE PRAY EVERY DAY. BY REMOVING THE STONE FROM ITS NATURAL SETTING, SITI INVITES THE VIEWER TO CONSIDER THE FATE OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE IN TERMS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH WAR AND POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, AND THE DELICATE RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVED IN THE INTENSIVE AND CHAOTIC WORK OF RECONSTRUCTION.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DISTANCE FROM HIS HOMELAND HAS LED SITI TO DEVELOP AN INCREASINGLY ABSTRACT, PAINTERLY STYLE INFORMED BY, BUT NOT DIRECTLY DEPICTING, ITS VIOLENT ROOTS. THE USE OF SYMBOLS SUCH AS STONES AND FIRE HIGHLIGHTS THE UNIVERSAL PLIGHT OF WAR AND EXILE – PHYSICALLY DISTANT THOUGH ALWAYS EMOTIONALLY CLOSE TO HOME.

CURATED BY ROSE ISSA

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT ROSE ISSA ON 020 7602 7700 OR EMAIL: INFO@ROSEISSA.COM