

Press Release

Hrair Sarkissian

Imagined Futures

13 March - 25 April 2015

Private View: Thursday 12 March 6.30pm-8.30pm

Exhibition Open: Tues-Sat, 11am-6pm, FREE

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW



Homesick, 2014, (video stills), Hrair Sarkissian
Images courtesy of the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Greece



Front Line, 2007, Hrair Sarkissian

The Mosaic Rooms, London, are pleased to present the first UK solo exhibition by Hrair Sarkissian, featuring new video and previously unseen photographic work that reflect on concepts of place, conflict, and future. Overlapping with Tate Modern's current group exhibition which includes Sarkissian's work, this free exhibition will give audiences the chance to view the artist's practice in greater depth, at a time when he is gaining increased critical recognition.

Imagined Futures showcases two projects, made seven years apart, that both deal with issues of temporality: one with a non-time, a suspended unrecognised present; the other constituting a projection from an envisioned future that threatens to rupture the present at any moment. Together these bodies of work visualise that which is out of time – histories, people and narratives that have yet to be realised, political spectres that intrude upon the present. These emotive and resonant works engage the viewer beyond the reductive reportage of immediate information media, and make seen what is unseeable, the prospects of time.

Front Line (2007) draws on the artist's own Armenian identity to contemplate the uneasy predicament of a people and place with an unknown political destiny. They look at a war-torn enclave between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the self-proclaimed independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Throughout the centuries the claims over this territory have shifted, the borders been mapped and remapped, yet the repression of the region's indigenous Armenians has persisted. Today, over a million of its Azeri and Armenian inhabitants remain displaced; last year saw some of the worst clashes for a decade, and Western powers are still trying to negotiate a long-term solution. The photographs portray both

the landscape and those that fought during the 1988-1994 war. Through a sense of isolation, estrangement and haunting, the works raise questions about the price of war and the contradictions inherent within struggles for national independence.

The new two-screen video installation *Homesick* (2014) depicts the artist destroying an architecturally-precise, scaled replica of his parents' home in Damascus. More than just a house, the building represents a space where he belongs, a container for his memories, and a place for his family's collective identity. Through *Homesick* Sarkissian constructs a story that, in the current political situation of mass destruction and civil war, could very well take place. He contemplates what the consequences would be? What does it mean to expect the worst? Can we fast-forward the present, acknowledge loss and begin reshaping a collapsed history, even before the event?

Alongside the exhibition, The Mosaic Rooms will be launching Sarkissian's first publication, *Background*. This book has been produced through the public support it gained from its selection to be showcased on the first Art Basel Crowdfunding Initiative in partnership with Kickstarter.

Hrair Sarkissian (b. 1973, Damascus, Syria) uses photography to re-evaluate larger historical, religious or socio-political narratives. Sarkissian has exhibited widely internationally in both group and solo shows including Tate Modern (London); New Museum (New York); Darat Al Funun (Amman); Mori Art Museum (Tokyo); SALT Beyoglu (Istanbul); Thessaloniki Biennale; Sharjah Biennial; Istanbul Biennial; Asia Pacific Triennial (Brisbane) among many others. In 2013 the artist won the Abraaj Group Art Prize. Hrair Sarkissian is represented by Kalfayan Galleries, Greece.

For further details, images and to arrange interviews contact Rosa Attwood at press@mosaicrooms.org or on + 44 207 370 9990.

Notes to Editors

- The artist Hrair Sarkissian is available for interview.
- Images and biographies are available on request.
- Entry to the exhibition is free. The Mosaic Rooms are open from 11am–6pm Tuesday to Saturday.
- The exhibition will be accompanied by a public programme of talks and events.
- Thanks to the artist's gallery, Kalfayan Galleries, Greece, for their support of the *Background* project
- *Background* will be launched at a special event on 14 March 2015
- *Background* will be available from The Mosaic Rooms bookshop and online shop
- The Mosaic Rooms are a vibrant non-profit cultural space and bookshop in West London dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world. They provide an international platform for the arts, particularly new work, and create opportunities for collaboration and professional development between artists, collectives and organisations from the Arab world and the UK. They do this through their free entry contemporary art exhibitions, their multidisciplinary events, artist residencies and learning and engagement programme. They work in partnership with national and international organisations to disseminate their combined arts programme to the widest possible audience. The Mosaic Rooms' programme is run by Rachael Jarvis, Director. The Mosaic Rooms form part of the A.M. Qattan Foundation. Visit www.mosaicrooms.org
- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell Road and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London, a short walk from Earl's Court Underground Station and Exhibition Centre.