

Contemporary Culture from the Arab World

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**Hajra Waheed**

*Sea Change — Chapter 1:*

*Character 1, In the Rough*

11/3/16—21/5/16

**the  
mosaic  
rooms**



**ENTRY FREE**

The Mosaic Rooms present a unique programme of free contemporary art exhibitions, talks, films, and other special events. We are a non-profit gallery and cultural space in West London dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world.

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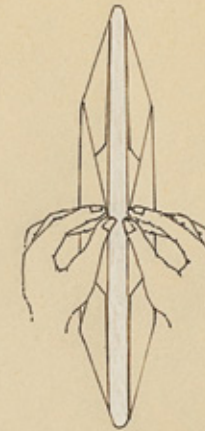
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**Hajra Waheed**

**Sea Change — Chapter 1: Character 1, In the Rough**

**Private view Thursday 10 March 6.30-8.30pm**

**Exhibition runs 11 March-22 May 2016**

**Tuesday-Saturday 11am-6pm, FREE**

The Mosaic Rooms are proud to showcase a selection of works from the opening chapter of Hajra Waheed's long-term project *Sea Change*. Commenced in 2011, this visual novel is dedicated to reclaiming a sense of the intimate, the personal and the poetic from the consequences of regional development, political upheaval, and civil conflict. Through a narrative unfolding over nine chapters, of nine characters who have disappeared, this ambitious multimedia work aims to engage the viewer in an active sense of looking for the individual story amidst the mass, reflecting on the reductive value of the media's portrayal of contemporary crisis, particularly in terms of migration.

*Sea Change — Chapter 1: Character 1, In the Rough* features a series of works that reveal the journey of an individual on a quest for quartz crystals buried amongst rubble and rock. The pieces are composed of interspersed archival and newly-created visual material. The archival imagery was sourced from a large deck of 1930-40s photographic postcards, which depict an Orientalised view of people and places in the Global South. These collected materials and imagined

representations generate new stories via the artist's reclamations and interventions.

The artist's account of this character through altered material begins here with *A Short Film (1/331)*. In this installation she re-appropriates twenty-five of the postcards, reconfiguring them into hundreds of glass slides; each portraying an element of Character 1's voyage. Viewers are invited to examine each slide using step stools. As they physically negotiate the work, a narrative unfolds. Comparable to stills from a film, each captured scene allows viewers to pause and reflect as they move from one to the next, unravelling and uncovering the individual's quest. In reading the work, viewers are invited to animate each suspended scene in their own recompositions. These spatial projections are then anchored by discarded fragments from the spliced images pinned onto two corkboards, reminding viewers of that which remains and is left out of scene.

From here the story moves into the main gallery, where we uncover details of the character's field notes and studies as he begins his search of discovery. Quartz crystals' material properties mean that, amongst other



Above Detail of *A Short Film (1-331)*, 2014

Cover *Before We Were Fed to the Light*, 7/8, 2015



Above Details from *A Short Film (1-331)*, 2014,  
courtesy of Burger Collection Hong Kong

Facing page Detail from *Quell This, Swallow Me (1-5)*, 2014

uses, they are the most precise and unfaltering natural time-keeping devices. Character 1's pursuit for temporal stability is manifested in grids of works on paper displaying co-ordinates of unknown places; drawn and photographed geographies and topographic displays of subterranean fields. As information unfolds, the viewer begins to question whether the story and these materials are autobiographical or fictive, or suspended somewhere in between. Waheed invites us to question the acceptance of presented information as truth, and in doing so reveals the potential instability of media, political and historical representation.

The pursuit of this narrative continues into the lower gallery, where we begin to sense what lies beneath. A single gaze is dispersed in the form of intimate paintings of infinite oceanic surfaces. Haunting, empty horizons, and smoke signals without origin, hint at attempts to reconnect. Instructions on how to make an origami boat intimate the fragility and transience of traversing the vastness of the unknown alongside a search for place. Amongst all the works on view, two simultaneous investigations are revealed — one an exploration of the soul, the other a mining of official histories as a means to unearth those lost.



Above Installation view from *Our Naufrage*, 2014

Character 1's search remains in essence a meditation on the possibilities of discovery. The immersive visual diary and installation reflect on loss and being lost, of attempting to uncover a way towards a destination. As the viewer travels alongside the character, it is clear this sought destination is not merely physical or material, but an imagined space that embodies notions of hope, promise and a lingering sense of love and longing.

The body of work presented here does not represent the entirety of the project, which remains ongoing. Employing visual imagery in the narrative style of literature, Waheed has created a uniquely poetic approach to contemporary practice. Allowing the individual viewer to project, decipher and reimagine a story, *Sea Change* invites a reading into a journey of absence and disappearance that is profoundly resonant today.

## Artist biography

Hajra Waheed's oeuvre seeks to address personal, national and cultural identity formation in relation to political history, popular imagination and the broad impact of colonial power globally. Through news accounts and extensive research, Waheed develops narratives and follows characters in ongoing bodies of work that constitute a growing personal archive. Although works on paper remain the foundation of her practice, they often act as starting points for larger mixed-media installations. Over the last decade, Waheed has participated in exhibitions worldwide, most recently including: *The Cyphers*, Baltic, Gateshead (2016); *Still Against the Sky*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2015); *La Biennale de Montréal*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2014); *Sea Change*, Experimenter, Kolkata (2013); *(In) the First Circle*, Antoni Tàpies Foundation, Barcelona (2011) and *Lines of Control*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, NY (2012). Recipient of the prestigious 2014 Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award for outstanding achievement as a Canadian mid-career visual artist, her works can be found in a number of collections including the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the British Museum, London; the Burger Collection, Hong Kong and Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi. She lives and works in Montréal.

# Spring Programme

## MOBILE HORIZONS

A series of events in dialogue with *Sea Change*, curated by Nada Raza.

### **Film: From Gulf to Gulf to Gulf Thursday 14 April, 7pm**

This film is the result of dialogue, friendship, image-making and exchange between the Mumbai-based collaborative studio CAMP and sailors from Kutch, Sindh, Baluchistan and Southern Iran, working in the wharfs of Sharjah and Dubai.

**Tickets £6.50**

### **Talk & Presentation: Liquid Traces Thursday 21 April, 7pm**

Lorenzo Pezzani and Charles Heller (Forensic Architecture, Goldsmiths) present a new set of investigations on boat accidents in the Mediterranean sea in 2015, leading to unprecedented fatalities among migrants fleeing conflict.

**FREE**

### **Talk & Performance: The Abyss of Space**

#### **Wednesday 27 April, 7pm**

Artist and writer Himali Soin Singh, inspired by literature and the planet, reflects on deep outer space as a place of interferences, entanglements, irrational law, alienation and infinite mystery.

**FREE**

## TALKS

### **In Depth**

#### **Wednesday 16 March, 7pm**

Writer Sukhdev Sandhu leads a panel discussion on the aesthetics and politics of representations of the sea in contemporary culture, from migration to labour politics, to climate change.

**FREE**

### **This Sea Is Mine**

#### **Thursday 12 May, 7pm**

The 2016 Qalandiya International biennial in Palestine will use the sea as an entry point to contemplate concepts of return and refuge. Join Rawan Sharaf, director of Palestinian Art Court, and Nicola Gray as they discuss this year's edition.

**FREE**

### **Patriotism and Dissent in the Global South**

#### **Thursday 19 May, 7pm**

Authors Pankaj Mishra and Vijay Prashad in conversation about the rise of authoritarianism in Egypt, Turkey and India; the germination of cultures of resistance; and important questions surrounding solidarity and the intellectual.

**FREE**

## FILM

### The Nine Muses

**Wednesday 23 March, 7.30pm**

Artist John Akomfrah's retelling of the history of mass migration to post-war Britain through the lens of Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. This incredible film is divided into nine musical chapters and mixes a vast array of archival material.

**Tickets £6.50**

### Space and Memory in the War Torn City

**Wednesday 18 May, 6.30pm**

First event as part of our guest-curated film strand *Crisis and Creativity: A Season of Contemporary Films from and about the Arab World* by Shohini Chaudhuri. This session will screen a series of short films and host a panel discussion.

**Tickets £6.50**

## LITERATURE

### This Orient Isle

**Thursday 7 April, 7pm**

Join Jerry Brotton in conversation about his latest book which explores the breadth of Elizabethan England's cultural, economic and political relations with the Islamic world; part of international history which has been previously obscured.

**FREE**

## MUSIC

### Alhaan Al Siduri

**Thursday 5 May, 8pm**

Written by the award-winning British-Bahraini composer and trumpeter Yazz Ahmed, the Yazz Ahmed quartet perform music inspired by traditional Bahraini pearl divers' songs, a genre known as *fidjeri*, or sea music.

**Tickets £10**

## OFFSITE

### Culture Now

**Friday 11 March, 1pm, ICA**

Join Hajra Waheed in conversation with Rachael Jarvis, Director of The Mosaic Rooms, about her practice and current exhibition as part of the ICA's series of Friday lunchtime conversations for the culturally curious.

**Tickets £5/free for ICA members via ICA**

### Edward W. Said London Lecture

**Wednesday 4 May, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall**

Naomi Klein delivers this year's lecture in memory of the great literary critic, writer, and activist Edward Said. Presented by A.M. Qattan Foundation/The Mosaic Rooms, Southbank Centre and London Review of Books.

**Tickets £10/£15/£20 via Southbank Centre**

Free events: [rsvp@mosaicrooms.org](mailto:rsvp@mosaicrooms.org)  
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