

Press Release

HAJRA WAHEED

Sea Change - Chapter 1: Character 1, In the Rough

11 March - 21 May 2016

Private View: 10 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm

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

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



Detail from *A Short Film* (1-331), 2014; Detail from *Quell This, Swallow Me* (1-5), 2014

The Mosaic Rooms, London, presents the first showcase of 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 the unfolding narratives of nine individual characters who have disappeared over nine chapters, this ambitious multimedia work aims to engage the viewer in an active sense of looking for the individual story amidst the mass, in turn reflecting on the reductive value of the media's portrayal of contemporary crisis, particularly in terms of migration.

The exhibition, *Sea Change - Chapter 1: Character 1, In the Rough* features a series of works that reveal the journey of an individual on a quest to find quartz crystals buried amongst rock. The viewer wanders through the works in the exhibition, looking at the details of this character's field notes, cut photographs, co-ordinates of unknown places, painted and drawn geographies of sea and geology. The viewer is left questioning whether the story and these materials are autobiography or fiction, or lie somewhere in between. In turn Waheed is drawing us to a wider questioning of the acceptance of presented information as truth, in the context of media, politics and historical representations.

Chapter 1 is composed of interspersed archival and newly-created visual material. The archival imagery was directly 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 allow new stories to be constructed. The meaning of the project's title becomes not only about these characters' personal voyages of transformation, but material alteration as well.

Character 1's search remains a reflection on the possibilities of discovery. The immersive visual diary and installation reflects on loss and being lost, of attempting to discover 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 belonging. Underlying all the works in the exhibition is this lingering sense of love and longing.

Born in Canada and raised within the gated community of Saudi ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia, home to a quarter of the world's oil exports, Waheed grew up under strict regulations, including the prohibition of photographic and video documentation by civilians. In conditions of secrecy and isolation, she developed a childhood obsession with keeping logs of her observations in her own secret visual language. Through news accounts and extensive research, Waheed now develops narratives and follows characters. Her mixed-media practice consists of 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. Her work can also be found in a number of permanent collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the British Museum, London; the Burger Collection, Zurich and Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi.

The Mosaic Rooms exhibition coincides with Waheed's first institutional UK solo exhibition at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (until 30 May 2016).

The exhibition will be accompanied by a specially curated public programme that examines the themes in the exhibition in more detail. Visit www.mosaicrooms.org.

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

Notes to Editors

- Hajra Waheed is available for interview. Images and biography 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.
- The Mosaic Rooms are a leading London-based non-profit cultural organisation 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.
- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London.
- Visit www.mosaicrooms.org