



Ahmed Alsoudani / MATRIX 165

First Solo Museum Exhibition in the U.S. to Include Large-Scale Paintings that Depict Artist's Memories and Interpretations about War

HARTFORD, Conn., August 28, 2012 – Iraqi-born, American artist Ahmed Alsoudani's first solo museum exhibition in the United States will premiere at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art this fall. In 2011, Alsoudani's work featured prominently in an unequalled three separate exhibitions at the Venice Biennale—the Pavilion of Iraq's *Wounded Water*, the Pan-Arab world's *The Future of a Promise*, and the Pinault Collection's *The World Belongs to You*. The politically-engaged artist's MATRIX exhibition will feature six of Alsoudani's signature charcoal and acrylic paintings that evoke the persistent memories and surreal horrors of war and conflict. All created within the past several years, the new work signals a shift in Alsoudani's subject matter—depicting not only the effects of violence and war, but also the corrupt leadership and elaborate moneyed machinery behind the brutal regimes. Part of the Wadsworth's ongoing MATRIX contemporary art series begun in 1975, with a legacy of “firsts” for important emerging artists, the exhibition will be on view from September 6 through January 6, 2013.

Alsoudani's exile and personal history are central to his work. His story has been well documented. Born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1975, the artist grew up during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) and the Gulf War (1990–1991) before immigrating to the United States in 1999. Initially landing in Washington, D.C., he learned English before moving to Portland, Maine, to attend the Maine College of Art. Alsoudani began art school in 2001, just weeks before the tragic events of 9/11 when the world changed with widespread xenophobia and heightened levels of security across the nation. The artist explains his distinct circumstances: “I've been in the unique and painful situation of observing the war and being in the U.S. while my family remains in Baghdad. I'm away physically, but I talk to my family very often, so I feel caught between. The state of being 'between' two places and two worlds allows me to see and hear things from a different point of view.”

“Ahmed Alsoudani’s paintings address memories of war as universal experiences in chaotic constructions combining abstraction and figuration, animate and inanimate objects. The stark oppositions in these disturbing works fuel their power: the highly-saturated color juxtaposed with the comparatively monochromatic charcoal, jumbles of bloodied flesh and severed limbs along with cold and jagged metal,” said Patricia Hickson, the museum’s Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art.

“Having experienced the destruction caused by war firsthand and through the continued contact with his family and friends, Alsoudani is a contemporary history painter of sorts, producing long-processed reinventions of political and military conflicts that resonate with the Wadsworth’s extensive collection of history paintings and battle scenes,” Hickson continued. “But, more importantly, Alsoudani’s wildly agitated compositions embody the pervasive anxiety of the contemporary world in which we live.”

About Ahmed Alsoudani

Ahmed Alsoudani (American, born Baghdad, Iraq, 1975) currently lives and works in New York. He earned a BFA at Maine College of Art in Portland in 2005 and a MFA at Yale School of Art in 2008. In October 2012, Alsoudani premieres his first gallery show with Haunch of Venison in New York. In 2013, the Portland Museum of Art (Maine) is organizing Alsoudani’s survey exhibition that will travel to the Phoenix Art Museum and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. His work is in the collections of the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; and the Qatar Museum, as well as numerous prominent private collections worldwide, including the Charles Saatchi and François Pinault collections.

About MATRIX

The Wadsworth was the first to embrace the idea of contemporary art in an encyclopedic museum through its MATRIX program, which began in 1975 as a series of single-artist exhibitions that have showcased more than 160 artists, providing many with their first solo museum exhibition in the United States—including Janine Antoni, Dawoud Bey, Louise Lawler, and Adrian Piper. Many MATRIX artists, such as Christo,

Willem de Kooning, Sol LeWitt, Robert Rauschenberg, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, and Andy Warhol, are now considered seminal figures in contemporary art.

Upcoming MATRIX Exhibitions

Deb Sokolow / MATRIX 166 – Some Concerns About the Candidate

February 7 – June 2, 2013

Virgil Marti / MATIRX 167

July 11 – November 10, 2013

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut. The museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 am – 5 pm and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 5 pm, and the first Thursday of every month 11 am – 8 pm. Please visit www.wadsworthatheneum.org for more information.

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