A visual encounter that confronts the viewer with a jewel-toned backdrop juxtaposed with a disturbing image of war and despair. Jagged edges are threatening, spaces, marked by Alsoudani’s agitated and/i political sentiments, does not directly relate to his root cause.

I'm not trying to express my feelings. I'm not interested in depicting any specific circumstances. I'm away physically and hear things happening to me, it’s a state of being.

Alsoudani’s exile to Iran during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) was well documented in English before moving to the United States. 

Alsoudani began to paint after the world changed for him, the Iraqi native moved to the United States, the young artist created his paintings in this altered world by painting 
individual and body parts using metal desk lamps.

COVER IMAGE: UNTITLED, 2011 CHARCOAL AND ACRYLIC ON 87 1/2 X 63 1/2 IN. PRIVATE COLLECTION IMAGE: COURTESY HAUNCH O
ABOUT WAR...

A visual encounter with a painting by Ahmed Alsoudani feels more like a visceral confrontation with the aftermath of violence. The artist intentionally uses alluring, jewel-toned background colors, reminiscent of Renaissance palettes, to temper the dark subject matter, but the vivid tones give way to the surreal assemblage of disturbing imagery. Raw and injured flesh and corrugated metal tubing with dangerous jagged edges are graphically rendered alongside haunting spectral figures and threatening beasts that emerge in ghostly variations of gray from the compressed spaces, marked by heavily barred windows and reinforced steel cages. Overall, Alsoudani’s agitated and chaotic compositions convey impressions of devastation, despair, and political unrest. However, the artist explains that the aggressive work does not directly depict war:

I’m not trying to make “war paintings,” but paintings about war. I’m more interested in depicting the effects of war on people who live under these circumstances. So generally I don’t show actual battle scenes in which there are soldiers, or fighting or weapons. 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.

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 there during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) and the Gulf War (1990–1991). Alsoudani immigrated to the United States in 1999, initially landing in Washington, D.C., where 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. The new, heightened levels of security across the nation affected the Iraqi native more than most. In addition to being uprooted from his own war-torn country, the young artist now faced suspicion and xenophobia in America. In the paintings in this exhibition, Alsoudani refers to homeland security and this larger altered world by incorporating restricted areas, numerous recording devices (individual and banks of microphones), signs of surveillance (staring eyes), and metal desk lamps commonly used in interrogation.
a visceral uses alluring, to temper assemblage of with dangerous ures and compressed Overall, devastation,pressive work

In Untitled (2012), a blue sleeve—three wooden podium, in the form of glaring eyes. A pipe, carrier of the pro- 

Over the past years than focus on vio- lence. Untitled, an abstracted portrait, leaders can be found their own conclusions. military uniform, byproducts of the electrical elemen- brain, a reptilian and a trio of eye words. In the low, mimicry and what

In Untitled (2012), another grotesque and family, as we He begins most m

Once there during the learned Art. 3

of 9/11 when nation affected our own war-torn America. In the larger devices (eyes), and

The subject matter, and family, as we
Over the past year, Alsoudani has shifted his approach to his subject matter. Rather than focus on violence, the most recent paintings address the reasons behind the violence. Untitled (2011; cover image), the signature image for the exhibition, is an abstracted portrait of a corrupt dictator—his true identity is not important, as such leaders can be found across the globe. (The artist also prefers the viewer to draw his own conclusions in reading a narrative.) The portrait subject dons a non-specific military uniform, and his ghoulish face is a hideous tacked-together construction of byproducts of the violence he generates—misplaced body parts, shrapnel, tubes, and electrical elements. A single light bulb occupies one of three available sockets for a brain, a reptilian protuberance replaces a nose, a puckered anus stands in for a mouth, and a trio of eyeballs stares downward toward a broken microphone awaiting its words. In the lower left, a small monkey, with two lamps trained on it, represents mimicry and what leaders become when they lose sight of their actions.

In Untitled (2012; image 2), Alsoudani represents corruption in the tortured form of another grotesque creature—a raw, pocked-flesh sock puppet emerging from a blue sleeve—that takes its place before a bank of microphones. Supporting the wooden podium, a hollow dog-like phantom keeps watch through gas mask lenses, its ribs exposed. Behind the scenes, in back of a broken mirror, terrifying hybrid ghost-beasts, connected by ribbed tubes, oversee the spectacle with a variety of glaring eyes. A barred window traps the subjects in the space, and a heavy metal pipe, carrier of the precious oil at the monetary heart of so many political conflicts, protrudes into the scene.

Oil—in the form of a peeled-open oil can—also features prominently in the largest painting in the exhibition, Untitled (2012; image 3). A corrupt and aging dictator (on the right side of the canvas) defies death with continual “watering,” from his grassy patch of hair, to his failing body that is held together with an alarming array of metal cogs and tubes, wires, electronics, and pills. He stands vertically only with the support of a harness and three chains, while propped against a wood ledge topped by a glass partition. Behind the glass curtain, Alsoudani reveals the complex machinery that maintains the life of any number of ancient, ailing political leaders. A decrepit conveyer belt is attended by the artist’s signature specters and monsters (rendered all or partially in charcoal). Ironically, they assure an endless supply of replacement hearts (for the heartless dictator). A spare arm with gloved hand waits in the wings; chessboards punctuate the strategic game and continuing charade, while time stands still in an alarm clock without hands.

The subject matter in Alsoudani’s art is derived from his personal experience, friends and family, as well as world politics—and most certainly not only the Middle East. He begins most mornings by visiting BBC Online to follow the latest news.
matter. Rather behind the exhibition, is an important, as such never to draw his non-specific construction of metal, tubes, and sockets for a nose in for a mouth, waiting its represents.

The featured form emerging from supporting the mask lenses, rendering hybrid a variety of heavy metal and political conflicts,

in the largest of the dictator (on his grassy array of metal with the support by a glass machinery that decrepit remnants (rendered replacement in the wings; while time stands

experience, friends
Middle East.

At the same
time, he generally ponders political stories for multiple years before bringing the content into his paintings. Although Alsoudani’s work is regularly associated with powerful war-themed masterpieces like Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937), and Francisco Goya’s *Disasters of War* (1810–1820) and *The Third of May 1808* (1814), the artist finds connections to other artists. He is more interested in viewing his work as an extension of the New York School that gave America its own identity in the art world, outside of the Eurocentric art scene. Alsoudani particularly aligns his work with the movement’s Philip Guston and Willem de Kooning, who both employed figuration and abstraction in an expressionistic language. Like Guston, whose unique style and lexicon included a signature large head, the sole of a shoe, a hanging light bulb, and cigarette as recurring imagery, so Alsoudani continues to develop his own personal technique and visual vocabulary. Alsoudani’s work already looks like no other contemporary painter’s.

Steeped in recent history, he has developed a wide variety of compositions and techniques alongside monochromatic works. Endlessly engaging, his compositions often combine a combination of approaches and styles. More. Ahmed Alsoudani was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1973 and now resides in New York City. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Baghdad in 1993 and his Master of Fine Arts from the University of Texas, Austin, in 2001.

*UNTITLED*, 2010
CHARCOAL AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
80 X 80 IN.
PRIVATE COLLECTION
© AHMED ALSOUDANI

*UNTITLED*, 2012
CHARCOAL AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
44 X 45 IN.
COURTESY THE ARTIST & HAU
IMAGE: COURTESY HAUNCH O
Steeped in recent political subjects and narratives, Alsoudani’s paintings employ a wide variety of conflicting elements that combine to bring explosive power to his compositions. Using equal parts realism and abstraction, along with the unusual combination of acrylic painting and charcoal drawing that highlights vibrant coloration alongside monochromatic grays, the artist activates the already visually-loaded compositions and complex themes with these additional dynamic contrasts. Endlessly engaging and open to interpretation, his art is about war, and so much more. Ahmed Alsoudani’s wildly agitated paintings express the pervasive anxiety of the contemporary world in which we live.

PATRICIA HICKSON
Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art
AHM

EDUCATION
2008  MFA, Painting
New Haven, CT
2006  Skowhegan School
Madison, ME

SELECTED SOLO
2012  Ahmed Alsoudani
Ahmed Alsoudani
Atheneum M
New York, NY
2011  Ahmed Alsoudani
Los Angeles, CA

SELECTED GROUP
2013  Francis Bacon
Paula Rego
Paula Rego
Marlborough
2011  Boundaries of the World
Haunch of Venison
Paula Rego
Wounded Woman Pavilion, Geneva
The Future of the World
from the Arab Gulf States
54th Venice Biennale
The Francois Pinault Foundation
2010  Le Route de la Mer
Tri postal, Lille
Natural Resources
New York, NY

SELECTED COLLECTIONS
Burger Collection
Dar Noor Collection
Francois Pinault Foundation
The Saatchi Gallery
Columbus Museum of Art

Ahmed Alsoudani's works employ the unusual power to conjure anxiety with the unusual brash coloration and visually-loaded contrasts. And so much more.
AHMED ALSOUDANI

EDUCATION

2008  MFA, Painting, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
2006  Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Madison, ME
2005  BFA, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME
2004  Yale School of Music & Art, Norfolk, CT

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012  Ahmed Alsoudani / MATRIX 165, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
       Ahmed Alsoudani, Haunch of Venison, New York, NY
       Ahmed Alsoudani, L&M Arts, Los Angeles, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2013  Francis Bacon, Philip Guston, Paula Rego and Ahmed Alsoudani, Marlborough Fine Art, NY
2011  Boundaries Obscured, Haunch of Venison, NY
       Wounded Water, 54th Venice Biennale, Iraq
       Pavilion, Gervasuti Foundation, Venice
       The Future of A Promise: Contemporary Art from the Arab World, 54th Venice Biennale, Venice
       The World Belongs to You, Palazzo Grassi, The Francois Pinault Foundation, Venice
2010  Le Route de la Sole, The Saatchi Collection, Tri postal, Lille, France
       Natural Renditions, Marlborough Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Burger Collection
Dar Noor Collection
Francois Pinault Foundation
The Saatchi Gallery
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH

WORKS IN THE E

Untitled, 2010
Charcoal and acrylic
80 x 80 in.
Private collection

Untitled, 2011
Charcoal and acrylic
87 1/2 x 63 1/2 in.
Private collection

Untitled, 2012
Charcoal and acrylic
72 x 108 in.
Courtesy the artist &

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Burger Collection
Dar Noor Collection
Francois Pinault Foundation
The Saatchi Gallery
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH

American, born 1975
Lives and works in New York.
ARTIST TALK
MATRIX Gallery Talk
Ahmed Alsoudani
Thursday, September 6, 6:00 pm

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Charcoal and acrylic on canvas</td>
<td>80 x 80 in.</td>
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<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Charcoal and acrylic on canvas</td>
<td>72 x 60 in.</td>
<td>Private collection, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Charcoal and acrylic on canvas</td>
<td>44 x 45 in.</td>
<td>Courtesy the artist &amp; Haunch of Venison, New York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

American, born 1975, Baghdad, Iraq
Lives and works in New York, New York

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Lives and works in New York, New York

1 Ahmed Alsoudani in Convers
2 Alsoudani’s journey from Iraq
3 Ibid.
5 It should be noted that Alsoudani’s journey from Iraq
6 Suzannah Biernoff, “The Importance of Cultural Identity”
7 “Ahmed Alsoudani in Sarah Sc”的
8 Ahmed Alsoudani in Mark WA

See www.huffingtonpost.com
ARTIST TALK

Ahmed Alsoudani
Thursday, September 6, 2012
6:00 pm
Ahmed Alsoudani will discuss his artworks in the Eleanor H. Bunce Gallery.

MATRIX 165 is supported with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and The Dedalus Foundation, Inc.

The MATRIX program is also supported by the current and founding members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition.

Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

2 Alsoudani’s journey from Iraq to the United States is discussed in great detail in his conversation with Robert Goff. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
3 Ibid.
5 Discussion between the author and artist in the artist’s studio, 3 June 2012.
6 It should be noted that Alsoudani’s paintings are all untitled in order to not lead the viewer’s reading of the compositions.