

# GAZELLI ART HOUSE

## SAAD QURESHI CONGREGATION

Preview:

9/10/2014

Exhibition Dates:

10/10 - 23/11/2014

Location:

Gazelli Art House  
39 Dover Street  
London W1



Saad Qureshi, Light Removed the Curtains of Night, charcoal, white chalk, graphite, Indian Ink on gaboony plywood, 120 x 170cm.

Following the international acclaim of Saad Qureshi's inaugural solo show in 2012, Gazelli Art House will present the artist's new body of work, Congregation, from 10th October 2014. The display will include concrete and wooden sculptures together with large charcoal and Indian ink drawings on wood, and a central installation. Through this exhibition the artist explores the relationship between matter and aura, or the physical and the cultural - examining how objects and places take on an importance beyond their physical presence.

The central installation of Congregation is rooted in an event briefly mentioned in the Quran, where a divinely-inspired flock of abaabil birds dropped burning pebbles on an army and so saved the sacred Ka'bah. In the Quran itself, the birds are given little physical description, while in later writings on the story they are rendered fantastical - the largest birds ever seen, with predatory faces and dog-like paws - sharing in the medieval tradition of the bestiary that gave us imaginative creations such as the griffon and the phoenix. Across most cultures, birds are polyvalent symbols (storks bring babies, magpies arbitrate on fortune, etc.), and they are frequently associated with flight and freedom.

In the installation, 99 wooden stands ranked like an army ready for battle provide perches for 313 life-sized abaabil birds which are fantastical in form, are composed of plaster and straw, which evoke the idea of fossilisation. While the stands are uniform and plinth-like, the birds are suggestive in form, reflecting the fact that these are birds made in the mind as much as in physical matter. Qureshi's focus is thus reinforced - the power of belief and applied knowledge to our surrounding.

The large charcoal-on-wood drawings that accompany the installation depict real and imagined landscapes - some having great cultural and historical significance, others not. Qureshi intentionally draws attention to these specific places to create a void of attachment, further questioning the importance that the place then holds for the viewer. A series of new sculptural diversions from the landscape drawings, in the form of date palm leaves, are casted in concrete and scattered around the space. These ambiguous objects serve as a discussion point, a self-reflection on what truly carries importance and how, if at all, we separate it from that which we see.

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Congregation is intended to evoke ideas that are both dramatic and sacred. The works in the show encourage us to consider the visible and the invisible, the mundane and the supra-mundane. Qureshi creates works that have resonances on multiple levels, making the exhibition and the concepts it explores accessible rather than alienating.



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## NOTES TO EDITORS

After graduating from the Slade MFA in painting in 2010, Qureshi appeared in and secured a finalist position on the BBC television programme School of Saatchi. Since then, he has exhibited widely both in the UK and internationally – including in the Creative Cities Collections exhibition at the Barbican Arts Centre, and shows in New York, Hong Kong, Turin, Rome, Dubai and Istanbul. Qureshi's first museum exhibition took place at the Museum voor Moderne Kunst in Arnhem, Netherlands, which catalysed his career further. Amongst others, his awards include the Royal British Society of Sculptors' Bursary Award, the Celeste Prize, and the Red Mansion Foundation Prize. Qureshi's work often explores notions of belonging in a multicultural society.

Gazelli Art House opened its first permanent gallery space on Dover Street, London, in March 2012 after hosting conceptually interlinked off-site exhibitions across London in 2011. In October 2012, the gallery re-opened its original space in Baku, Azerbaijan where it held exhibitions with Azeri artists since 2003.

As part of Gazelli Art House's on-going commitment to art education, the gallery will host a series of events and talks to run alongside the exhibition. As an art organization they are dedicated to providing a new setting for the understanding and deeper appreciation of art.

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