

FRAMEWORK

#6 | *the place & space issue*





01. Baby I Would Climb The Andes 2014, Claudia Nicholson, Image courtesy of Firstdraft Gallery and Zan Wimberley



Editorial

Welcome to the second edition of Framework for 2014. In this issue our contributors tackle the theme 'Place and Space'. As a lover of site-specific work, geographies, topographies, mapping and local/global perspectives; 'Place and Space' are often my key entry points into arts writing. It seems as though other contributors feel similarly about the topic. In this issue, artists and writers respond to local issues through broader themes. Claudia Nicholson (creator of our cover image and the adjacent image) playfully addresses international dislocation through her multidisciplinary practice.

Rebecca Gallo interviews prolific artist and COFA legend Emma Price about her latest venture- building a new venue called the Bearded Tit. Annie Murney looks at a local socially-engaged project called Yurt Empire and ponders the future of property ownership in Sydney. Catherine Knight reviews the latest work by OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT at Safari Live. COFA graduate, artist, curator and dear friend of mine Amelia Wallin reviews Why Not Walk Backward? at Gertrude Contemporary from this year's Next Wave Festival in Melbourne.

Next up, THE COLLABORATION ISSUE. Would you like to contribute? The theme is inspired by Emma Price's interview in this edition of Framework. "Abracollabra!" she says. I can relate to that.

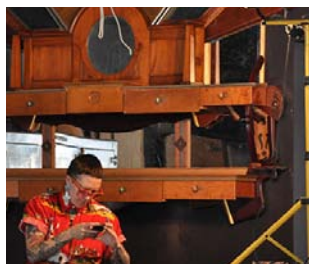
Thank you to Arc@COFA for making this publication possible, particularly to Penelope Benton for her ongoing support. I'd like to extend thanks to the wonderful writers featured in this issue. If you would like to contribute to the next issue of Framework, please do get in touch (m.white@arc.unsw.edu.au) and keep an eye out for Framework in semester 2!

- Maria White

**THE
PLACE
&
SPACE
ISSUE**

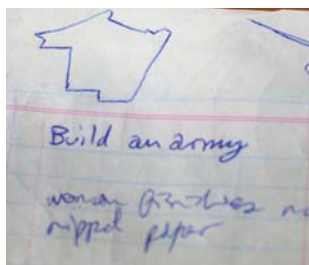
ARTIST PROFILE

Claudia Nicholson



Q&A

Emma Price
by Rebecca Gallo



YURT EMPIRE

by Annie Murney

OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT

by Catherine Knight



WHY NOT WALK BACKWARD?

by Amelia Wallin



FRAMEWORK

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

EDITOR

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Front cover image

'Hips Don't Lie', 2013,
Claudia Nicholson

watercolour, glass paint, gold
dust and collage on paper,
39x29cm, Photo by: Stephanie
Simcox

Claudia Nicholson

As a Colombian born artist, adopted and raised in Australia, I occupy an ambivalent position between both Australian and Latino cultures. I was born in Bogota Colombia in 1987. I am drawn to Latin American culture and have returned to Colombia several times over the past six years, which has been fundamental to the development of my practice. My work is multidisciplinary; spanning ceramics, textiles and video art with a foundation in painting and drawing.

I have worked extensively with my family, using performance to comment on social attitudes pertaining to kinship and familial relationships. Tensions of cultural hybridity and dislocation resonate throughout my practice, as demonstrated in my recent exhibitions; group show 'We visited in canoes, we swam in freshwater rivers and we conquered from our ships' at 107 projects and solo show 'Ni Chicha Ni Limonada (Neither beer nor lemonade)' at Firstdraft Gallery. 'Ni Chicha Ni Limonada' is a colloquial expression common in South America used to describe something difficult to define. A similar expression to 'neither fish nor fowl.'

In 'Si tomas el agua de Neshuya (Once you have tasted the water of Neshuya)' I appropriated Latin American and Australian folklores and pop cultural references, particularly with reference to pregnancy, birth and kinship. In Brazilian folklore, the pink dolphin transforms into his human form, a handsome (white?) man in a white suit and hat. He seduces and impregnates local women, and even today some children of unknown fathers are called "children of the Dolphin."

'Ni Chicha Ni Limonada' takes its cue from the Alzate ceramics of Colombia. In 1912 the Alzate family were exposed for having produced fake pre-Columbian ceramic artifacts that were internationally acclaimed. In this body of work I aimed to conflate traditional South American and pre-Columbian art making practices with my own, in an attempt to insert myself back into Latin American history. I attempt to call into question ideas of cultural identity and authenticity.

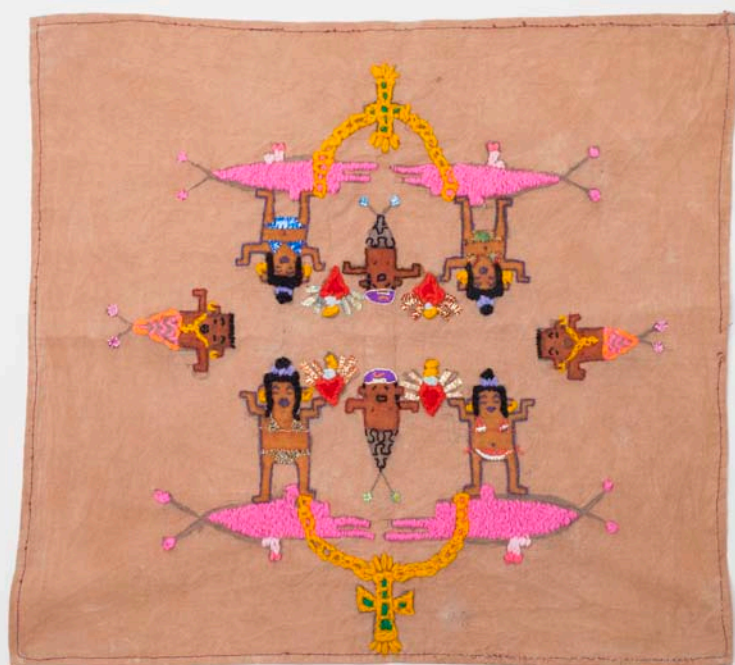
I recently participated in Centro Selva's artist in residency program in the Peruvian Amazon. 'Ni Chicha Ni Limonada' is heavily influenced by the Silletas from the Annual Flower Festival in Medellin. A silleta is a wooden device made to transport and display flower arrangements that are pictorial depictions of Colombian life and culture.

My work creates a transcultural dialogue that merges aesthetics, processes, history and vernaculars.

Nicholson is currently undertaking a Masters (Research) degree at COFA. She is nominated for the YEN Female Art Awards.

01. Si tomas el agua de Neshuya (Once you have tasted the water of Neshuya), 2013, achote (natural dye), arsilla (clay pigment), wool, collage on calico, 40x44cm, Photo by: Patrick Cremin

02. Selection from series Mamacitas, Earthware, dimensions variable, Photo by: Patrick Cremin





03. You Can Choose Your Friends (Mum chews steak & I eat it), 2012, Single channel HD Video 11:47min
 04. In Possible Worlds 2013 Installation view, image courtesy of 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and Zan Wimberley
 05. Luck of the draw (work with mercedes) detail, 2011- 2013 Multi channel video installation
 06. Luck of the draw (work with mercedes) detail, 2011- 2013 Multi channel video installation



Q&A WITH

EMMA PRICE



PERFORMER, ARTIST, LECTURER AND BON VIVANT EMMA PRICE DISCUSSES HER CREATIVE PROCESS, SHARES HER OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL SPACE ON ARTISTS' DEVELOPMENT, AND ARGUES THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEETING PLACES FOR THE FACILITATION OF COMMUNITY, COLLABORATION AND CELEBRATION.

REBECCA GALLO CAUGHT UP WITH EMMA PRICE TO TALK LIFE, ART, AND THE BEARDED TIT.

RG YOURS IS A FAMILIAR FACE AND NAME TO MOST WHO HAVE COME THROUGH COFA IN THE LAST WHILE. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THIS PLACE OVER THE YEARS?

EP I had the alarming realization this semester that I had been at COFA for as long as some of my students have been alive!!!

I started my BFA in Sculpture, performance and installation in 1995, taking a brilliantly long time with travel, living, love and other distractions as my research assistant, to finally complete my MFA in 2008. I've been lecturing in COFA's hallowed halls and studios for the last 8 years. During this time I have attended various Porosity studios in China and Cardiff with Richard Goodwin, headed BFA Hons studio classes and held a three-day performance workshop at the infamous annual Sculpture Camp [at the UNSW Smith's Lake research station].

RG HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY PARTICULAR TRENDS OR TENDENCIES, GOOD OR BAD, EVOLVING AMONGST GRADUATING AND/OR EMERGING ARTISTS OVER THE YEARS, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE WAY ARTISTS ENGAGE WITH SPACE AND PLACE?

EP Trend is a peculiar word, and can be both the arrowhead of super clever ideas, but also falls foul to lazy "quotation" of other artists. Artists cannot help but be influenced by what is happening in the studio and galleries around them, we all need to research, it's just some emerging artists are making work because it's the work they think they "should" make. It's better if they make honest mistakes instead. At least it's theirs.

Certainly the world has shrunk since I have been thinking and doing as an artist. Via both professional and social online networks, the osmotic hyper-awareness of what is happening with visual practice and the world it occupies

has created an immediacy of image that I'm still trying to grasp. The accessibility to instant "sharing" that happens with smart phones has created a hyperactive network of artists and activists. Responses are raw and unprecious, relevant and unyielding. Good Art.

RG YOU ARE KNOWN FOR YOUR COLLABORATIONS, MOST EXTENSIVELY AS ONE OF THE KINGPINS, BUT ALSO WITH OTHER PERFORMERS, ARTISTS AND CURATORS. HOW DO YOU NEGOTIATE AND POSITION YOUR OWN SOLO PRACTICE ALONGSIDE YOUR COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS? WHAT DOES COLLABORATION ENABLE THAT CAN'T BE ACHIEVED ALONE, AND VICE VERSA?

EP There is a magic word. Abracollabra. It's a shitty bumper sticker, but "Magic Happens".

I occasionally dabble in the dark arts of solo-practice, however collaboration is paramount to my practice. I'm not really afraid of the big, bad solo practice, it's just never as satisfying for me as when I work with others. I'm fascinated by the architecture of collaborative synergy, the ever-bubbling think tank of when people get together to visually tackle a problem, protest, comment or celebrate. The collective process, skill sharing, the challenges that arise both formally and pragmatically, and the energetic rigor, are unparalleled. After collaborating with The Kingpins for 14 years I can't help but think in fours. My projects tend to be large commissioned works and curated exhibitions, and that is a lot more fun with a few hostages in tow.

RG LAST YEAR YOU STAGED AN ART BAR AT THE MCA, 'ART IS FOR LOVERS', AND THIS MARCH CO-CURATED 'DAY FOR NIGHT' WITH JEFF KHAN AT PERFORMANCE SPACE

– A LARGE-SCALE DANCE PARTY AND EXHIBITION. NEXT MONTH, YOU'RE OPENING A BAR AND CREATIVE SPACE, THE BEARDED TIT, IN REDFERN. IN THE CONTEXT OF THESE QUITE VARIED PROJECTS, CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SPACE IN THE CREATION AND FACILITATION OF COMMUNITY IN THE SYDNEY ART WORLD AND BEYOND?

EP The art world needs community. Sometimes it falls short through the imperative of commercial survival (not that there is anything wrong with that), or the lack of accessible spaces due to Sydney's obnoxious rising rents and OHS protocols.

There is no "I" in TEAM, however there is a "U" in community. Social spaces, both virtual and bricks and mortar, are responsible for the coming together of people and things. Creative exchange passes through the membranous walls dividing the studio, the gallery, the museum, the club, the bar and the street. Through these intersections, interdisciplinary research and connection manifest, however social spaces are a site where something else happens. Whether in a meeting place, a safe space, the community hub of a pub or café, or on the dance floor; like attracts like, and these are the beginnings of community.

It's only then that there is the network and support to make real things happen. True power in numbers and the awesome knowing that one has a group of like-minded individuals around them wanting to shake shit up. Sydney has a vast and wonderful community of intergenerational and trans-disciplinary artists. I'm so proud to be part of it.



PRICE BELIEVES THAT THERE IS POWER IN NUMBERS, AND THAT FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO ARISE, WE NEED PLACES IN WHICH TO ASSEMBLE. IN AID OF THIS, PRICE, WITH COLLABORATORS JOY NG AND PETE MAINWARING, HAS BEEN HARD AT WORK BUILDING A NEW CREATIVE SPACE IN INNER SYDNEY. THE BEARDED TIT WILL BE A SPACE FOR PERFORMANCE, VIDEO ART, INSTALLATIONS, FOOD AND DRINK, BUT ABOVE ALL A MEETING PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER. AS WE GO TO PRESS, IT'S STILL A CONSTRUCTION SITE – A POROUS SPACE OF REVOLVING FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS, BUILT ON LOVE, GOODWILL, PERSEVERANCE AND BLOODY HARD WORK.

STAY TUNED for the opening of
The Bearded Tit

**Art Gallery + Bar + Performance
Venue**

183 Regent St Redfern



Q3. Pete Manwaring, The Bearded Tit (process image) Photo by: Rebecca Gallo 2014

Q4. Joy Ng, The Bearded Tit (process image) Photo by: Rebecca Gallo

Q5. Emma Price, The Bearded Tit (process image) Photo by: Rebecca Gallo



YURT EMPIRE:

ARTISTS, GEOGRAPHERS, RADICALS.

by *Annie Murney*



ACCORDING TO THE ECONOMIST'S LATEST WORLDWIDE COST OF LIVING SURVEY, SYDNEY CAME IN AHEAD OF TOKYO AND NEW YORK, NIPPING AT THE HEELS OF OSLO AND ZURICH. IT'S NOT NEWS THAT OUR SEASIDE METROPOLIS IS NESTLED FIRMLY AMONGST THE HIGHER ECHELONS OF EXPENSIVE CITIES. WITH A PROPERTY MARKET THAT IS SATURATED BY FOREIGN INVESTORS AND NEGATIVE GEARING, IT'S A DISMAL LOOKING FUTURE FOR PROSPECTIVE FIRST HOME OWNERS.

As affordability deteriorates faster than any of the other mainland capitals, Sydney is faced with a housing and rental crisis. Students and young people eager to enter the market are copping the fiercest punch from this shortage of supply and overheated demand. This bias towards wealthier classes means that we are excluding an entire generation (not to mention other disadvantaged groups) from independent home ownership.

It is without question that Sydney is an increasingly globalised city. The question is what kind of global city do we want it to be? It is important to view creative sectors as economic assets. This idea has been a key driver behind arts policy overhauls in both London and New York. Let's remember that art does have the power to challenge existing social and economic barriers. We need to assist creative industries in reaching their full potential by nurturing existing creative structures as well as galvanising the next generation of culture-makers. As a start, this involves steering foreign investment away from existing real estate and into creating an additional supply of quality, architecturally engaging, and affordable living spaces; ideally, spaces which enhance and refresh the cultural identity and artistic tenor of their precincts and neighbourhoods.

Whilst, many artists venture overseas in pursuit of cheaper creative meccas, such as Berlin and New York (believe it or not), others are dedicated to carving out inclusive artistic spaces on home soil. An initiative of this sort that has been taking shape since 2010 is Yurt Empire, a provocative art project and urban intervention speaking out against Sydney's severe lack of affordable housing. The plan was to 'occupy' and install the yurts on site later this year. Unfortunately, after an unsuccessful Pozible campaign and curatorial difficulties, the future of the project is uncertain. Yet, even in a developing phase it raises a number of important issues for public discussion.

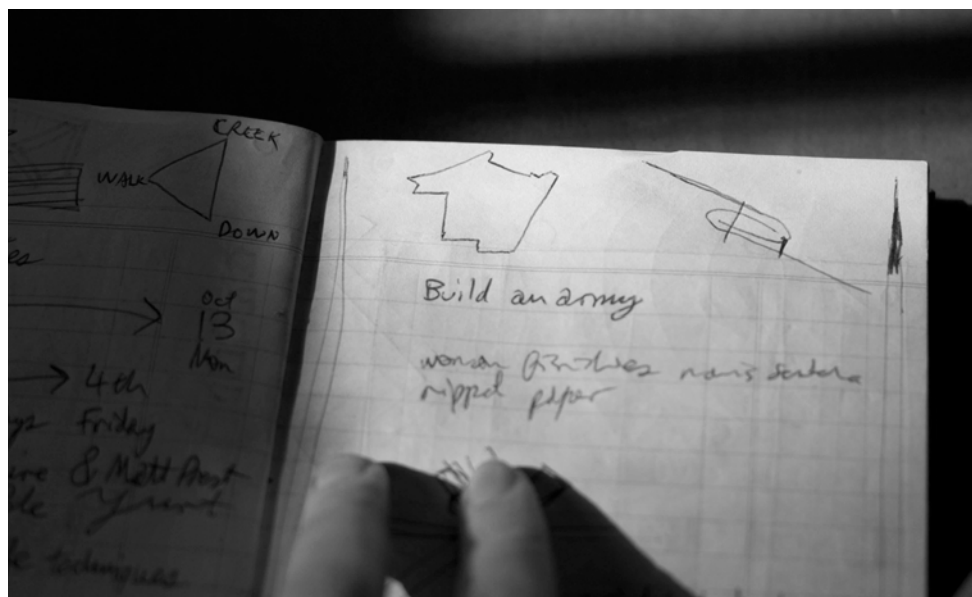
Yurt Empire began as a large collaborative project with a number of artists from a range of disciplines, including Zanny Begg, Pia Van Gelder, Matt Prest, Tessa Zettel, and Rebecca Conroy, to name a few. Informed by permaculture principles, the plan was to "graft an artists' colony and economy onto a site currently undergoing urban renewal." The proposed site was in Green Square, a suburb that is yet to become the cultural player of its neighbours, Alexandria and Waterloo, areas sporting booming pockets of gentrification. However, this fast-growing Southern precinct is set to become an exemplar of sustainable living with Sydney City Council committing \$440 million to delivering quality infrastructure and community facilities over the next ten years.

Taking the simple model of the Mongolian Ger, a series of workshops saw twenty-three artists experiment with different design strategies in order to build six individual yurts. The anticipated temporary tent village was intended to open up conversation about how we design and move through our cities. There was also range of events and performative encounters planned to engage the public and vamp up visibility. Ultimately, the project sought to examine how we are involved in the development of our cities and how communities respond to urban renewal. It is the intersection between social and political concerns and incisive design solutions that made Yurt Empire such an exciting and important project. Nevertheless, we can hope that some of the concepts generated will filter into other projects, or see a new life elsewhere.

Some of these yurts were already under construction. To get an idea of what some of them look like, Chris Fox and Adam Kennedy were working on 'Aqua Yurt:' a half-dome structure built from recycled 15 litre polycarbonate water bottles. Responding to the geometry of the bottle, the idea is to provide water catchment and storage in addition to shelter. Other yurts that were in development included the 'The Reading Shroom,' blending together elements of utopian architecture to create a haven of alternative knowledge. This pop-up library was to play host a slew of cultural activities, i.e. film screenings, discussions, and gatherings. Beyond the aesthetic inspiration of the mushroom, this spore-producing fungus relies on discarded matter from other species, thus it is an intrinsic recycler. There's also the 'Remix Ger,' guided by a strategy of web scavenging. In pondering the relationship between the digital world and the 'real' world, this team set out on a mission to accumulate building materials

through resource redistribution websites, such as ebay and gumtree. Anything that carries the stamp of its previous use qualifies as appropriate. These yurts are all in various stages of development, whether the teams of artists will follow through and exhibit them in alternative spaces remains to be seen.

Although it's deeply unfortunate that Yurt Empire has stalled, its development alone has served to spotlight a range of ideas around affordable housing, how cities are designed, and artist-led economies. Who knows, perhaps it will form the blueprint of a new adventurous and multi-disciplinary art project. In proposing alternative solutions to a real problem, artists and architects are urban pioneers that should be recognised for the cultural and economic reawakening they bring to cityscapes.



OK YEAH COOL GREAT AT SAFARI LIVE : REVIEW

by Catherine Knight



WARRIORS FOR THE ARTIST RUN COMMUNITY OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT BATTLE IT OUT AT SAFARI LIVE. SAFARI LIVE IS THE 2014 EDITION TO THE SAFARI PROGRAMME, WHICH RAN FROM THE 15TH - THE 30TH OF MARCH. THE FESTIVAL IS THE ARTIST RUN COMMUNITY'S ANSWER TO THE SYDNEY BIENNALE, OFFERING UP A MULTITUDE OF EMERGING VOICES AND SPACES WITHIN THE SYDNEY ART SCENE.

With their charming and witty piece 'Battle Royale' the collaborative team OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT, made up of Kate Beckingham and Anne McMahon, transformed the pensive site of the gallery into a bubbling cauldron of enthusiasm with a playful arena atmosphere. Using the outdoor courtyard of Wellington St Projects the team created a makeshift game show, a 'draw-off' that brought cheers and howls to the opening night of Safari Live.

This contest involved the two artists memorising a host of famous artworks including works by Caravaggio, Picasso, Damian Hirst, a handful of local Sydney based artists and even their own previous works. The work is a tongue in cheek reflection on the competitive element that invariably sneaks into collaborative partnerships. More broadly it is "about what it is to remember a piece of art," says McMahon. They explore the frustrating experience of being able to "love a work... but actually when you try and recreate it, it's a bit shit" Beckingham offers. The performance works as a meditation on perception and the flawed nature of our collective cultural memory.

OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT began working together in 2010, during their honours year at Sydney College of the Arts. They have since exhibited at a host of dynamic spaces including Beams Festival, Performance Space and now Safari Live. Both Beckingham and McMahon are emerging Sydney-based artists whose professional engagement is heavily rooted in the artist run community. They have been heavily involved with student arts initiatives at SCA, where McMahon is currently studying a Master of Art History. She is employed by both the university art gallery and the student union, and serves as a committee member at SCA's Verge gallery. Beckingham is a committee member at MOP and has previously undertaken a residency at Firstdraft. Independently and through their collaborative practice they have, in small ways, helped shape the Sydney art scene and its ever growing pool of voices. "You do it because you believe in your community," states Beckingham. Both artists are firm believers in different modes of artist run initiatives and the potential these different platforms (including online media) have to support emerging local artists.

Beckingham remarks, “It’s great to have established places like MOP and Firstdraft but it’s also great to see other places starting different conversations.” They spoke in praise of Alaska Projects and temporary Artist Run Initiatives such as Melbourne’s Y3K gallery. These shared sentiments echo a move towards art spaces outside of established commercial spheres. There is an emerging desire for an artistic landscape where community involvement is central to boosting the overall quality and accessibility of work.

OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT’s interests in cultivating a sense of openness within the art community is evident in the conceptual exploration of ‘Battle Royale’. The piece challenges what ‘good art’ actually is, and the interplay between a visual reading of reality and the individual’s own stylised imaginings.

By publicly comparing the drawings by the two artists, it emerged that some images could be more pleasing to the eye while being less ‘correct’. ‘Battle Royale’ is OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT’s first performance work, having previously worked in a variety of other mediums including design, photo media, sculpture, installation, and video. This called for an altered process within the partnership, which initially emerged out of a shared design-based process. Their works have sustained a use of minimal aesthetics and witty humour. An approach of precision and clean design permeated the pre-production of ‘Battle Royale’. Beckingham says “we spent three hours in Ikea discussing the desk!”

In addition to OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT’s successful shaping of the refined visual elements of this work, what gives ‘Battle Royale’ its brilliance is its interactive nature, approachable tone, and cheeky melding of high and low art. A spirited kick start to Safari 2014.



02. Battle Royale, OKAY YEAH COOL GREAT, Safari Live, Photo by: Lara Merrington, 2014

03. Safari Live, Photo by: Lara Merrington, 2014



AMELIA

SDSDSD



COFA MASTER OF FINE ARTS CANDIDATE KHADIM ALI REVIVES THE CENTURIES-OLD TRADITION OF MINIATURE PAINTING IN HIS INTRICATE WORKS ON DISPLAY IN THE COFASPACE EXHIBITION THE HAUNTED LOTUS. ALI'S WORK REFLECTS A PERSONAL DESIRE TO RECLAIM THE MYTHICAL NARRATIVES OF THE HEROES AND DEMONS OF THE PERSIAN EPIC THE SHAHNAMEH, DEBAUCHED BY THE TALIBAN IN HIS NATIVE PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. A MEMBER OF THE PERSECUTED HAZARA MINORITY, KHADIM ALI RENEWS THE STORIES WITH HIGHLY CHARGED PERSONAL AND POLITICAL SYMBOLISM. ALI HAS EXHIBITED AT THE 2009 VENICE BIENNALE AND AT DOCUMENTA 13 AND HAS WORK IN COLLECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD INCLUDING THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM AND THE ART GALLERY OF NSW. BEN MESSIH CAUGHT UP WITH KHADIM ALI FOR A Q&A ABOUT HIS HISTORY, INFLUENCES AND PRACTICE.

BM CAN YOU GIVE US A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY AND HOW YOU CAME TO BE A MFA CANDIDATE AT COFA?

KA When I moved here in 2009 a friend of mine introduced me to Cross Art Projects' Jo Holder. It was Jo who really helped to get me into COFA - she introduced me to Ian Howard and Diane Losche, and it was her suggestion that I apply for a Master of Fine Arts. I received a scholarship and an APA so it was a really good opportunity to continue my studies. I wanted to do my Masters in Pakistan but [couldn't] because the situation in Pakistan is getting worse for the Hazara, so getting a scholarship was kind of a dream come true.

BM YOUR EXHIBITION THE HAUNTED LOTUS OPENS AT COFASPACE ON MARCH 25. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE THE HAUNTED LOTUS?

KA The idea of The Haunted Lotus is not new in my work. I was researching the lotus flowers at the Buddhist site of Bamiyan in Afghanistan where the Taliban destroyed two giant statues of Buddha in 2001. I went there to see the site after the destruction, all of the sculptures were destroyed and all the paintings on the roof or on the wall were burnt. Curiously, many of the original lotus

sculptures, reliefs and paintings remained. It was then that I began to delve deeper into the symbolism of the lotus: what the lotus is and why the lotus had arrived there. I thought 'how haunted they are', these things – these lotuses – are signifying how haunted the history of this place is and how the images got merged into different sects, different dynasties or different schools of thought. The Taliban in Bamiyan, did they leave those lotuses deliberately? Why didn't they destroy the lotuses? So the lotus flowers represent something hidden alive in another environment. It made me feel like I am that lotus and I felt as though I was haunted or being horrified.

BM Your works heavily feature the demon motif. Are these demons purely external or in response to your own internal demons present in your inner world?

KA So when my Hazara great-grandparents fled into what was then India (prior to the partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947) they had two books with them. Of course because they were Muslim, they had the Koran and the other book was Shahnameh, or The Book of Kings, which was written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi in 1010 CE. The Shahnameh is a secular epic poem book, the stories and characters are fictional, but the places the author mentions are all real. There are lots of demons in the stories and at the end, the hero, Rustam is betrayed



and killed by his own friend, so what survives in this story is the dark side of humanity: the demons. In 2000 I went to Afghanistan, I witnessed the Taliban calling themselves Rustam - I looked around and I found all of these demonic characters and nothing was bringing them closer to the gentleman Rustam, the hero that I had in my mind. It reminded me that this land actually killed these heroes, this land actually betrayed these heroes and now all of these demons are calling themselves Rustam, because Rustam is the symbol of heroism. I went into my own history, we are Hazara Shi'ite, in Pakistan and Afghanistan most of the population are of the belief that the Shi'ite are infidels. They call us 'non-human' and they treat us as though we are exactly that. If we really are what they claim - not human and they are killing us [the Hazara Shi'ites] and they are calling themselves Rustam, ultimately we become the demons. So from that I have this understanding that we are the demons written into the history of Afghanistan - because they were the authorities and an authority's history is his story. So now I'm just dealing with the demons and thinking, maybe, we are those demons and it's a collective self-portrait.

BM Can you tell us a bit more about the Shahnameh and why it has had such a profound impact on your practice?

KA My grandfather was a Shahnameh singer so I

remember when I was a kid, in those rural areas we didn't have electricity, we didn't have radio; the only source of entertainment were these stories of the culture in the Shahnameh which was brought by my Grandfather into Quetta, Pakistan. In Afghanistan's very harsh weather my grandparents had only 4 months of summer for agriculture, the other 8 months they were all trying to entertain themselves in the snow and the cold weather. Singing stories from the Shahnameh for those people - for me - it was, the most motivating subject of my life, it was the only thing I had in my life: the story of heroes, the story of demons. I grew up listening to those stories of demons and Rustam.

BM Do you view your use of The Rustam narrative and The Shahnameh as an effort to reclaim your own cultural heritage and the Rustam narrative from the Taliban? And do you feel pressure to reveal these truths?

KA I'm retelling the stories, I'm not dealing with the society or with specific people, it's all to do with my history and my own self, it's a kind of counseling between myself and my history. Just trying to trace where or why we turn into demons? I've never thought about the public or other factors of my works like 'what are the impacts of these artworks on the audience of these works' - 'What are the impacts of these works on my own self' is

far more important to me.

BM You have studied in mural painting and traditional miniature painting, these two practices seem almost juxtaposed – do you view your practice as a synthesis of these schools, or do you view yourself as strictly a miniaturist with a background in mural painting?

KA I wasn't a mural painter by choice. When I was a refugee in Iran I was doing it for my survival. I went to an art class and my teacher found my work stronger than the other student's work, he booked me for his own projects and I studied painting murals with him. The murals were all Islamic propaganda: images of the Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran and a girl praying as the door of heaven opened, along with images of Rustam with verses from the Koran for example. They were really all those things that I didn't want to do but was trapped into doing.

My first encounter with the art world were the miniature paintings in the Shahnameh, I grew up looking at them, I grew up looking at that character of the hero in the illustrations. When I got back from Iran to Pakistan I got a scholarship at the National College of Arts (Lahore, Pakistan) and I found out they did miniature painting and then I thought, well I'm made for miniature painting so I went into miniature painting there. Mural painting doesn't have anything to complement miniature painting; mural painting was for my survival, I didn't like painting murals, [although] I enjoyed finishing them, looking at the mural from the far distance, it gave me the feeling that my inner world has a projection that is de-scaling other people.

BM What does the rest of 2013 look like for Khadim Ali?

KA My graduation show, The Haunted Lotus, will be at COFAspace from March 26-30, this is my most important show, and will feature even bigger works than I exhibited at dOCUMENTA 13 (Kassel, Germany, 2012) - The Haunted Lotus is the biggest show of my life. Shortly after, I have work in a show at Casula Powerhouse (Landlock, 30 March – 12 May), and in April I am going to the Guggenheim in New York to conduct a workshop for teachers. I'm going to the Museum of Islamic Art (Doha, Qatar) in May to conduct workshops over two weeks. I'm also returning to Afghanistan to conduct workshops in June and July. I have been invited to San Art in Vietnam to do a one-month residency and I have a shows in Taipei

and at Hong Kong Art Centre in November and will also working on a project to show in the Project Space at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 2014.

Khadim Ali's exhibition The Haunted Lotus was at COFAspace between March 26 and March 30, 2013. Landlock is on show until 12 May at Casula Powerhouse, 1 Casula Powerhouse Road, Casula.

FRAMEWORK