

ARAB kareem risan: HYPH memory of EN another city

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Iraqi artist Kareem Risan's exhibition [Memory of Another City](#) runs from 8 September through to 17 October at [Katara Art Center](#).

The exhibition focuses on Risan's paintings that reflect on the traces and remnants of war and Baghdad's many walls and barricades.

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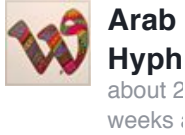
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“Wall paintings and signs were and still are one of humanity’s expressive styles and means by which man could face his daily problems, especially when deprived of the freedom of expression,” says the artist.

Born in Baghdad in 1960, Risan left Iraq following in 2005, during one of the most turbulent periods following the invasion. If you need to refresh your memory of what that time was like, this presentation by Rene Gabri captures much of what Risan’s work is about.



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“I don’t want to become an remarks a Bri Palestinian ac a roundtable discussion he between men London’s Pak community at a warm, brick

On Rhetoric (language and new warfare), Rene Gabri from BAK, basis voor actuele kunst on Vimeo.

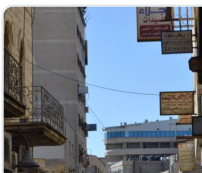
Much of Risan’s work examines the chaos and violence in Iraq post-2003, and is a reminder that the notion of a period “after the war” is not the reality experienced by Iraqis. As a friend from Mosul put it, “the war keeps giving birth to new little wars.”

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Many of Risan’s paintings seem to me to be a visual representation of the themes discussed by Iraqi poet Dunya Mikhael in her work The War Works Hard. Having experienced the Iran-Iraq war, the first Gulf war, and then the second, Risan like Mikhael must find the subject unavoidable, his art reflecting a bitterness at a lifetime of war. As Mikhael puts it:



Threaded on a England Times mcgilldaily.com

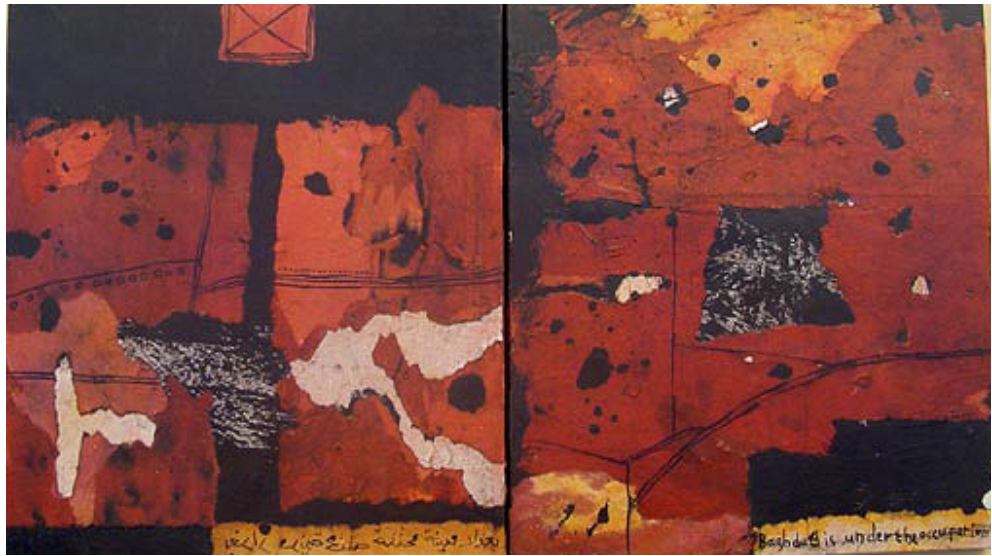
eventually we forget how, in the short lull between two wars,

we became so old.

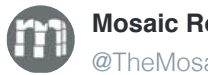


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Risan has also produced a number of handmade mixed media art books which are “one of a kind artefacts” including Uranium Civilization (2001), Occupied Baghdad (2004) and The Book of Sectarianism (2013). Among them are the wall paintings as well as paintings that work with maps and geography in ways reminiscent of news coverage and it’s use of satellites and aerial-views.



How an exhibit Artists, including theguardian.co



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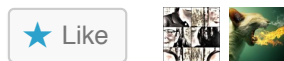


In **Uranium Civilization**, the artist employs text and painted imagery to create powerful expressions reflecting the lingering turmoil plaguing his homeland, while simultaneously calling attention to the fact that the destruction of Iraq began long before the recent invasion. Rendered in dark unsullied colors, the painted series speaks of the nightmarish effects caused by depleted uranium used during the Gulf Wars by American and British forces.

Risan combines deep reds and tar-like blacks with touches of gold and in some cases either words or traces of words, and hands and footprints that are layered in the images, using techniques of fragmentation and layering in ways that connect his work to other contemporary Iraqi artists such as Hanaa Malallah, who has produced [similar art books](#), and worked with [folding and layering burnt canvas and string](#) to produce images that disturbingly resemble a barren and blasted but still crowded landscape. This simultaneity of death and destruction in the midst of once full lives is what makes Risan's work so compelling.



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