

the mosaic rooms



CONTEMPORARY CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD



Bettir. Acrylic and pencil on linen, 2019. Courtesy the artist.

PRANEET SOI **ANAMORPHOSIS:** **NOTES FROM PALESTINE,** **WINTER IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY** **27 SEPTEMBER – 7 DECEMBER 2019**

Anamorphosis is the first solo exhibition in London by the Amsterdam based Indian artist Praneet Soi. The Mosaic Rooms has commissioned Soi to create a new body of work comprising paintings and drawings and a video work informed by his recent stays in Palestine. *Anamorphosis* will also

show recent work based on the artist's immersions in the workshop of a master craftsman in Kashmir.

Running from 27 September – 7 December 2019, the exhibition begins with *Yalla Yasmeen*. This latest single-channel video expands on his recent audio-visual installations which implement a cut and paste aesthetic, stitching together moving image, still image and drawings to generate a polyphonic narrative.

During Soi's visits to Palestine this year he travelled across the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, through the occupied Golan Heights, south to Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, Jenin and Ramallah and then headed back north to Haifa and Akka, leaving from Tel Aviv. Soi's aim was to experience the country through certain facets of its landscapes and to visit, en-route, farms, workshops and factories to understand productivity and entrepreneurship in Palestine. This subject has been a focus for Soi in his previous exhibitions, such as *Third Factory*, a solo at the Gulbenkian in Lisbon in 2018 and *Notes on Labour*, Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2017).

In Room 2, we see works including drawings and collages on linen canvas that were generated by the process of making the video, placed on a large modular structure. The specially designed structure, which has interconnected yet separate partitions, hints at Soi's experiences during his time in Palestine.

Soi has been engaging with the term anamorphosis as a metaphor for the distortions that are caused by a disturbed political climate. Anamorphosis is the distortion of an image that allows the viewer to see it only from one viewpoint (Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* (1533), in which the skull below is so distorted as to appear abstract is a well-known example of this technique). Here, Soi experiments with the technique in drawings of landscapes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, pointing to the fact that any representation of this landscape is necessarily a political gesture.

The final room in the exhibition is set in dialogue with the artist's ongoing work with craftsmen in Kashmir. In August 2019, whilst Soi was working towards this exhibition, the Indian state of Kashmir had its autonomous relationship with India revoked and its state-hood terminated. Kashmir has long identified itself with the Palestinian struggle. 1947 marked Indian independence from British rule, and the beginning of Kashmir's quest for autonomy. That same year, the UN voted to end the British Mandate in Palestine, leading to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, an event known as "Al Nakba" (The Catastrophe) to Palestinians. For Soi, it became imperative to include his ongoing work with craftsmen in Kashmir in this exhibition.

The room brings together a series of hand painted papier-mâché tiles that were produced in the atelier of the master craftsman Fayaz Jan, in his workshop in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir. These are installed on plinths in a darkened room, with texts from various sources traced in chalk on the blacked walls adding context to the installation. A sound-work, commissioned from Ramallah based composer Dirar Kalash plays in this space and the room above, linking the two bodies of work together.

Upon the papier- mâché tiles Soi utilises his archive of images, often taken from the media. The images are used as outlines which the craftsmen have filled by hand with traditional Kashmiri motifs that have been used for centuries. The texts on the walls include notes Soi made while working with the craftsmen of conversations about the art of making, and legal texts including the United Nations resolution number forty-seven, made in 1948, calling for a plebiscite in the region to allow the residents to choose their future with Pakistan or India.

Soi tells us that his interest in the politics of representation in relation to Palestine was sparked by an earlier visit where, as part of a visit to the 3rd Riwaq Biennale (2009) he along with other artists joined a UN organized contingent touring the region.

The exhibition is supported by:



COCKAYNE

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Praneet Soi

Praneet Soi was born 1971, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Following studies in India and the USA, Soi moved to the Netherlands in 2002, and has since divided his time between Amsterdam and Kolkata. His work is internationally recognized for his explorations of socio-political nuances and media representations, with his practice incorporating both traditional methods of miniature painting and sculpture, as well as time-based media such as video and sound. Recent solo exhibitions include *Third Factory - From Kashmir to Lisbon via Caldas*, at Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon in 2018; *Notes on Labour* at Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai in 2017 and Srinagar at the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven in 2016. Recent group exhibitions include *Blackout* as a part of IFFR 2019 at Kunsthal Rotterdam; the touring exhibition *A Beast, a God and a Line* at the Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh, Para Site, Hong Kong and Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw in 2018; and *Universes in Universes* as part of the 6th Asian Biennale, Taichung, Taiwan in 2017. His work has also featured at international venues including the 3rd Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India, 2016-17, the 13th Istanbul Biennale, Turkey, 2013 and Manifesta 9 in Genk, Belgium, 2012. In 2011 he was one of four artists representing the Indian Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale, Titled *It's About To Explode* and curated by Ranjit Hoskote. He has been the recipient of several grants including a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC in 2014. Over 2019 Soi will be involved in exploring the Dutch multinational company Phillips through the lens of Operation Centurion.

About The Mosaic Rooms

- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell Road and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London, a short walk from the V&A and Design Museum
- Entry to the exhibitions are free. The Mosaic Rooms are open from 11am–6pm Tuesday to Saturday.

The Mosaic Rooms are a non-profit art gallery and bookshop dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from the Arab world and beyond. We do this through our free contemporary art exhibitions, our multidisciplinary events (including film screenings, current affairs talks, book launches and more) artist residencies and learning & engagement programme.

We work in partnership with local, national and international organisations to disseminate our combined arts programme to the widest possible audience – in London and elsewhere. Our previous collaborations include partnerships with The British Museum, ICA, Shubbak Festival, London Design Festival and London Festival of Architecture, amongst many others.

We believe in the importance of creating a cultural space that presents new thinking and daring creativity, illuminates ideas, inspires understanding, and interrogates contemporary issues. Our vision is for a London audience with a more informed, engaged and critical understanding of Arab culture and society.

We are a non-party political, non-religious organisation, and we are a project of the A.M. Qattan Foundation, a registered charity number 1029450.

About The Qattan Foundation

The A.M. Qattan Foundation (AMQF) is an independent, not-for-profit developmental organisation working in the fields of culture and education, with a particular focus on children, teachers and young artists.

Founded and registered in 1993 in the UK as a charity (no 1029450) and as a charitable company limited by guarantee (no 2171893), it has had a registered branch in Palestine as a non-profit organisation (no QR-0035-F) since 1998. The Foundation's operations are mainly in Palestine, with interventions in Lebanon through Selat: Links Through the Arts, and in the United Kingdom through The Mosaic Rooms.

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LISTINGS INFORMATION

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Open 11am – 6pm | Tuesday – Saturday | Free Entry
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