

دِلِ كِه سوزِ نِداردِ، دِلِ نِست

(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

14 September - 22 October 2010



دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست

(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

I first met Mohammed in Melbourne at the end of summer 2006. He had come down from Sydney by bus to meet his cousin who was visiting from Pakistan. Mohammed was gregarious, generous, full of laughter. Somehow it came up that he had arrived in Australia on a boat from Indonesia. He spoke of the friendship and kindness of the Indonesian people. He talked about the difficulties of settling in Australia.

I met Mohammed again in Sydney a year later. By this time, he was studying at a technical college. He spoke about wanting to return to Pakistan to work with his brothers. Mohammed was tall with striking Hazara features. But he seemed to be a broken man.

There are pictures of men like Mohammed in recent news reports. Five men were killed in an explosion on an illegal shipping vessel carrying 49 asylum seekers off the coast of Australia. There are faces like Mohammed's amongst the groups of protesters gathered in downtown Toronto on a frozen February day. There are also pictures of men like Mohammed in Jayce Salloum and Khadim Alis' installation on Afghanistan. These pictures suggest that there are many stories remaining untold.

The grids of portraits in Salloum and Alis' installation intrigue me, as they represent encounters – however fleeting – that are not unlike my encounter with Mohammed. Encounters with strangers who disarm you. Strangers whose

life stories haunt you. The portraits in Salloum and Alis' installation strike me as pictures of hope. They exhibit a strength of character, a tenacity, even an optimism, that is quite different from the impression of Afghanistan generated by mainstream media.

Yet these portraits also remind me of the yellowing photographs of the inmates at the Tuol Seleng in Cambodia – a grim catalogue of those who were about to die. We don't hear much about the death count amongst Afghans. But I've recently started looking for it: in the news reports of increasing instability in bordering Baluchistan; in emails from colleagues informing us of murders and disappearances; in the increasing numbers of refugees seeking sanctuary in more stable countries.

Equally as disarming as the portraits are Salloum and Alis' photographs of the impossibly picturesque central Afghan landscape. The cold air and ripe stillness of the travertine mountains are unlike the dry, brown, dusty landscapes of Kandahar or Kabul. What will always stay with me is a phone call from the artists at 2 o'clock one morning in Toronto. They called from the mountains three hours northwest of Bamiyan. They described a breathtaking view overlooking the glittering lakes of Band-e Amir. I was jolted awake by the sheer joy in their voices, their expression of a wish to return. Stealing beauty can sometimes be a form of resistance.

Haema Sivanesan

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Jayce Salloum has worked in installation, photography, drawing, performance, text and video since 1976, as well as curating exhibitions, conducting workshops, & coordinating a vast array of cultural projects.

His practice exists within and between the personal, quotidian, local, and the trans-national. Currently residing in Vancouver, Canada, Salloum recently held a solo show at Artspace in Sydney.

He has exhibited widely, from the smallest unnamed storefronts to institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada; Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; CaixaForum, Barcelona; 8th Havana Biennial; 7th Sharjah Biennial; 15th Biennale Of Sydney, Biennial of Moving Images, Geneva and the Rotterdam International Film Festival.

Khadim Ali is a Hazara artist, currently based in Sydney, Australia. He trained in contemporary miniature painting at the prestigious National College of Art, Lahore, Pakistan, and in mural painting and calligraphy at Tehran University, Iran.

His work has been exhibited in museums and biennales including the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan; The Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival, Melbourne, Australia; the Venice Biennale, Italy; the British Museum, London, UK.

Ali has work held in numerous private and public collections including the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Above: Khadim Ali, *Untitled, Rustum series*, 2010, gouache, pencil and watercolour on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

دِلِ كِه سوزِ نداردِ, دِلِ نِست

(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

14 September - 22 October 2010

Jayce Salloum

Khadim Ali

Curated by Haema Sivanesen

Panel discussion:

Friday 17 September 1-2.30pm

With Paula Abood, Stephen Dupont, Haema Sivanesen & Khadim Ali

Acknowledgements:

Haema Sivanesen wishes to thank the artists and panel participants, Mr Tom MacDonald and Sharon Pinney from the Consulate General of Canada, Sydney, SAVAC Board of Directors, staff and volunteers particularly Srimoyee Mitra and Kohila Kurunathan and UTS Gallery curators Tania Creighton and Holly Williams and installation staff Paul Ogier and Kenzee Patterson.

A full colour catalogue accompanies the exhibition,
contact the gallery for details.



Co-commissioned by SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre), Toronto
& Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Kelowna,
With support from the Consulate General of Canada, Sydney and Apple



Government of Canada
Consulate General of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada
Consulat général du Canada



UTS Gallery supported by Oyster Bay Wines
and Coopers Brewery. Media partner: 2ser



Cover: Jayce Salloum *remnants,*
past in the present, standing
buddhas, shrouded caves,
bookshop storefront on the
main street in Bamian,
Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/15/08
[DSCF2741] (detail), 2008, digital
print. Courtesy of the artist.

Printed 100% recycled paper

UTS:GALLERY

Level 4, 702 Harris Street Ultimo
Monday - Friday 12-6pm | 02 9514 1652
www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au

UTS GALLERY

Arranged in thematic constellations, the clusters of photography play with scale and composition, often developing patterns of repetition and reiteration, which produces a mode of visual analysis. They record in some detail, the barely disguised relics of the Soviet-Afghan war, and attempt to capture and comprehend, if not reconcile, both beauty and trauma – the dramatic majesty of the sheer mountains and flat plains, the derelict hulks of long abandoned war machinery. The carefully composed photographs are attentive to details, and are evocative of the mood in Afghanistan beyond the frontlines of war.

This project takes the form of a personal archive which documents Salloum and Ali's journey to Bamiyān. The artists travelled from Karachi to Islamabad in Pakistan, onto Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and then overland into Bamiyān Valley in the central Afghan region of Hazarajat. Their objective was to survey the landscape and its contexts, observe the situation on the ground, and engage in encounters that would provide insight into the lived conditions of the Hazara people – a persecuted Shi'a Muslim minority in a country that is predominantly Sunni.

The grids of portraits have the utilitarian and uniform aesthetics of bureaucratic practices of photography – passport photographs, identity cards, licences, school photographs. Arrayed together in grids they suggest a community or population, a larger cultural identity, which describes the landscape of Bamiyān as a site of human struggle. The photographs were taken at the Marefat High School in Dashi-i-Barchi. For the Hazara, education is perceived as a means to a better life – means to achieve justice, social equality, and human rights.

The Shahnameh, an epic eleventh century poem by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, which examines the moral codes informing a virtuous mode of sovereignty. Of particular interest is the story of Rostam and Sohrab. Sohrab, estranged from his father since birth, meets his father Rostam, on the battlefield. They fight on opposing sides of the battle. Unaware that he is his son, Rostam kills Sohrab. The story deals with the futility of war, and the tragedy of misplaced heroism, within the larger context of an epic poem concerned with the ideals that constitute a model of nationhood. In Afghanistan, the Taliban appropriated the figure of Rostam as a heroic icon in their propaganda.

Inside the labyrinthine caves, one can see the jewel-like fragments of fresco paintings, now barely recognisable. The soot-stained domes of the interior of the caves are desecrated by scores of boot prints of Taliban soldiers.

The story of Persian poet Sa'adi's visit to a soup kitchen is used as a reference by Ali. Sa'adi was attacked by a pack of stray dogs. As he picked up a stone to defend himself he found the stones all frozen together and wondered what kind of place it was where all the stones were fixed in place and all the beasts were free? Ali uses the story in an allegorical way to explore the current situation in Afghanistan

Jayce Salloum and Khadim Ali's project takes its title from the school song in Marefat High School in Dashi-i-Barchi. A video loop depicts the girls at morning assembly in the courtyard of the school under a brilliant blue sky – an image of future promise.

Since 2003 Khadim Ali has been painting the destruction of the Bamian Buddhas. These paintings conflate myth, poetry and allegory with human experiences and real world events. Using austere colours and a watercolourist's style, these paintings mourn the annihilation of the Buddha figures, blown to rubble from the monumental cliffs in which they were housed.

The silent looped footage pans across a vast and enigmatic array of sandstone rocks – the rescued fragments of the colossal Buddhas – sorted into piles, catalogued and housed in sheds near the original cave site. A related cluster of photographs depicts larger ruins onsite, wrapped in high tech plastic. This material documents the ruins of the Buddhas at a specific moment in history, a time of transition between destruction and conservation, or possible restoration.

دل که سوز ندارد، دل نیست

(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)



دل که سوز ندارد، دل نیست
(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

Installation view at UTS Gallery
Photography by Jennifer Leahy, Silversalt Photography