

# LANDMARKS

JANANNE  
AL-ANI

 **AB-ANBAR**

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LANDMARKS



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# FOREWORD

*Landmarks* is a solo exhibition by Jananne Al-Ani spanning more than two decades of photographic and moving image work and marking the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War, an event that casts a long shadow over her practice.

*Landmarks* highlights preoccupations that have persisted over time and continue to reverberate throughout Al-Ani's distinctive body of work, a practice characterised by a profound engagement with lens-based technologies, from photography to film and video, and the complex interplay between truth and representation. In this publication which accompanies the exhibition, Steven Bode provides an overview of the artist's work over the last twenty years, bookended by two significant moving image installations: *The Visit* (2004) and *Timelines* (2022).

The exhibition includes a selection of early works among them *Portraits* (1999), a photographic series featuring women covering their faces with their hands in an act of resistance to the all-seeing camera, echoing the artist's concerns with veiling and the anonymity and freedom from the intrusion of the photographic gaze that the veil can offer. Among the women who appear in *Portraits* are Al-Ani's mother and sisters, who are regular collaborators in earlier works. They appear again in *The Visit*, a multi-channel installation featuring intimate recollections of love and loss set against a stark desert landscape. *The Visit* was a turning point for the artist, being the first of her works to be made in the Middle East and the last to feature the women in her family. Jane Rendell interweaves accounts of her encounters with these works with memories of her own childhood, offering new ways of engaging with and writing about artworks.

*The Visit* also marks the beginning of Al-Ani's longstanding interest in the representation of landscapes marked by conflict



and the way in which the combined technologies of flight and photography have transformed modern warfare and our understanding of landscape, at once revealing and concealing evidence of human activity on the ground.

Adopting the methods of an aerial archeologist, Al-Ani has produced a series of acclaimed films shot from the air over the landscapes of the Middle East, the American south west and Britain. *Black Powder Peninsula* (2016) focuses on the English landscape and features the remains of explosives factories, oil refineries and power stations - crumbling remnants of an empire in decline. *Landmarks* showcases Al-Ani's latest film *Sounds of War II*, combining subtly animated archival images with contemporary aerial photographs of the ghostly remains of decommissioned Second World War US airfields across rural East Anglia.

In a specially commissioned essay, Michael Guida reflects on the power of the bird's-eye view to reveal stories of military, industrial and agricultural power that live on in the British landscape.

Also reproduced here is an interview with Maria Walsh charting the development of *Timelines* (2022), a large-scale panoramic film in which hidden landscapes are revealed in the surface of a highly decorated brass tray in the V&A Collection. The tray is said to depict events on Armistice Day, 1918 but on closer inspection appears to record aerial attacks on civilian populations by British forces struggling to quell resistance to the occupation that followed the end of the First World War. One of many such experiments in aerial warfare that were played out across the empire in the early 1920s.

Al-Ani has created a new site-specific sound work for *Landmarks* by extracting the voice-over from *Timelines* in which her mother recalls growing up in Britain as the child of Irish

immigrants and living in Iraq through a period of intense social and political change in the 1960s and '70s. Her disembodied voice is joined by that of a British political officer who served in Iraq from 1917 to 1925 and wrote regularly to his wife, reflecting on his experience as both a witness to and a participant in the enforcement of British colonial rule.

By focusing on these early instances of violent confrontation in the wake of the First World War, Al-Ani asks us not to forget the pivotal role played by Britain in the formation of the modern Middle East and the many catastrophes and upheavals its communities have continued to endure to this day.



# LINES IN THE SAND

Steven Bode

The late-afternoon sun throws a line of shadow across the desert sand. The harsh light of the middle of the day, flaring, glaring, almost blinding in its intensity, is replaced by softer, sombre tones. The shadows lengthen, creeping over the surface of the land – advance notice of nightfall’s incoming tide. The longest shadow of all is cast by the solitary figure of a man, whose dapper appearance is even more striking in this otherwise barren and empty landscape. He paces, half in silhouette, and drags on a cigarette. A background hum of traffic noise (maybe this place is not so remote after all) implies that he may be taking a break, mid-journey, to stretch his legs – an assumption that we start to question as we return to him repeatedly, at intervals, treading the exact same ground, as if in a state of limbo, or the throes of a dilemma, or simply killing time, waiting for a meeting or appointment.

These short, single-take shots (seven in all) are looped together in *Muse* (2004): one half of Jananne Al-Ani’s multi-screen video installation, *The Visit*. The large projection screen on which they are shown is counterpointed by a companion work, *Echo* (1994/2004), made up of a neat row of four video monitors on which Al-Ani and her three sisters sit and confer, like members of a chorus, about a man who drifts in and out of their lives: an unnamed figure who is absent yet present, who visits but never stays. Their voices echo around the space, but only the most elliptical reference is made to the object of their musing – who may or may not be the man on the screen, and who may or may not be their father. Either way, it feels strangely appropriate, when the film sequence draws to a close, at a point where the sun is even lower in the sky, that the man’s shadow is considerably bigger than he is. A surrogate image of someone can often loom larger than the person themselves.

Steven Bode is Director of Film and Video Umbrella. During his thirty years with the organisation, he has commissioned and overseen works by over 200 artists. He has written catalogue essays on many of them, as well as numerous articles on art and film. Alongside his work for FVU, he has also curated several group exhibitions, including, most recently, *Somewhere Becoming Sea* for Hull City of Culture 2017, as well as ‘At Altitude’ (with Brian Cass) for Towner Eastbourne (2018).

All the different episodes in *Muse* offer the same wide-angle view from the same locked-off, static camera. If that camera were to suddenly ascend, borne aloft by a lightweight drone of a kind that would have been unfamiliar two decades ago but is all the rage now, the basin of scrubland below, and the long line of shadow that is formed upon it, might resemble the face of a sundial – marking time as well as place. This imagined overhead perspective suggests itself because of the aerial turn in Al-Ani's practice that started to announce itself not long after, exemplified by her film *Shadow Sites I* (2010). Here, footage shot from a light aircraft flying over a small swathe of the Middle East discloses hitherto unnoticed traces of human settlement or activity, some of recent vintage, others of more ancient lineage. Not iconic landmarks as such, more like anonymous marks on the land, these are features that don't necessarily show up on a map. Written in the sand but as elusive as ghosts, these 'shadow sites' only ever reveal themselves at certain angles or at certain times of the day.

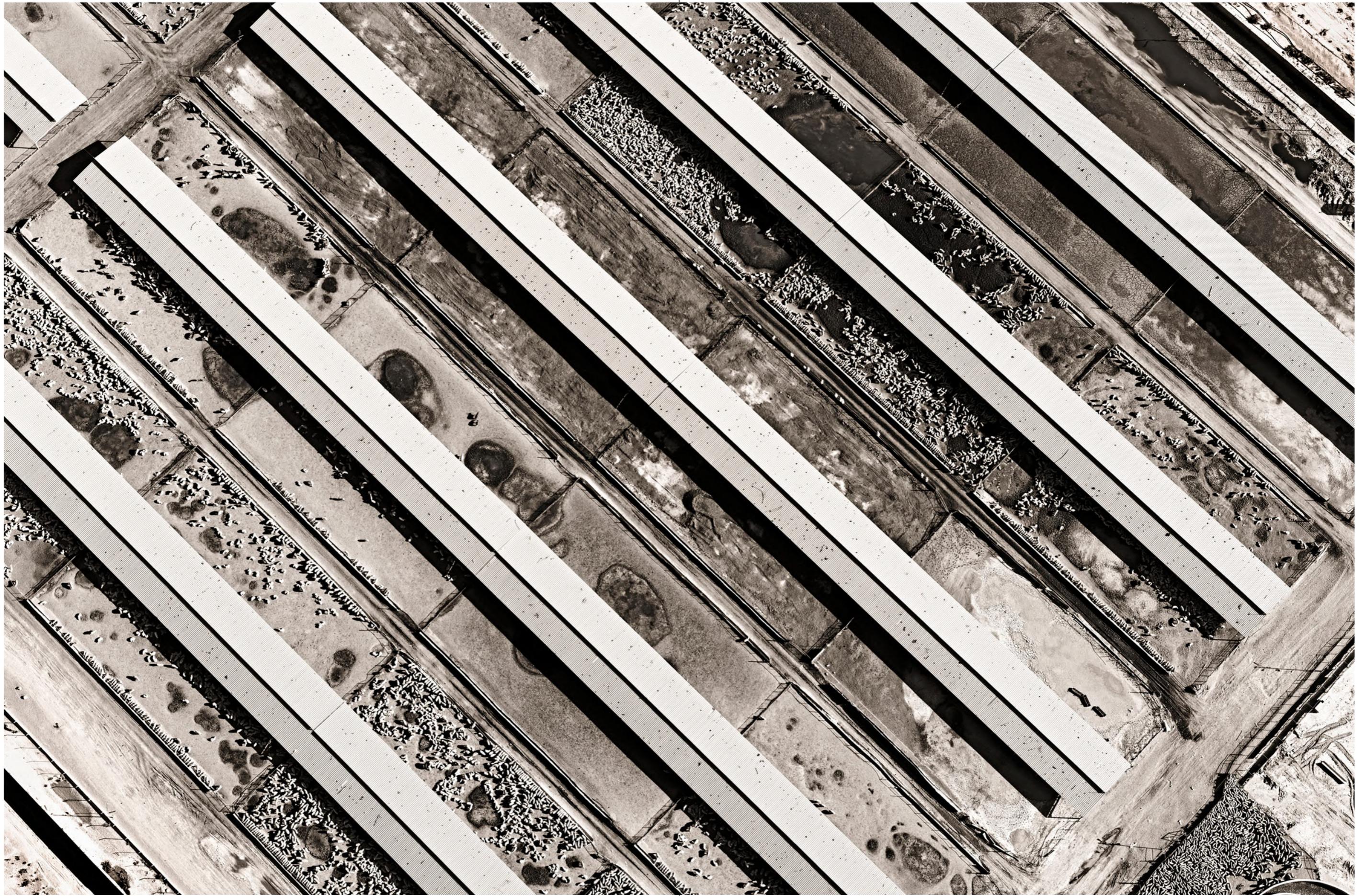
The free-floating, exhilarating experience of flight makes one almost forget the existence of other lines in the sand: in particular, the arbitrary borders imposed on this part of the world by the so-called Great Powers in the aftermath of the First World War. Or it might do, if this airspace, and the ground beneath it, wasn't still so unstable and contested. *Shadow Sites* reminds us that the 'desert lands' of the Middle East (sublimely empty in the romantic Orientalist imagination) have long been a locus of habitation and a seat of civilisation but also a zone of territorial ambition and conflict. A follow-up work, *Shadow Sites II* (2011), presses the point home. A series of disembodied overhead views of places on the ground that feel less like topographic

discoveries and more like potential targets, it cannot help but evoke some of the notorious battlefield images from the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 war in Iraq, when this area of the globe became a 'theatre of operations' for new types of 'smart' weaponry and a testbed for an increasingly omnipresent regime of panoptical military surveillance.



Production Still I from the Film *Shadow Sites I*, 2010

>  
Aerial VI Still  
from the Film *Shadow Sites II*  
2011, Archival Pigment Print





Timelines  
2022, Panoramic Video Installation  
Installation View Towner Eastbourne  
Photo by Rob Harris



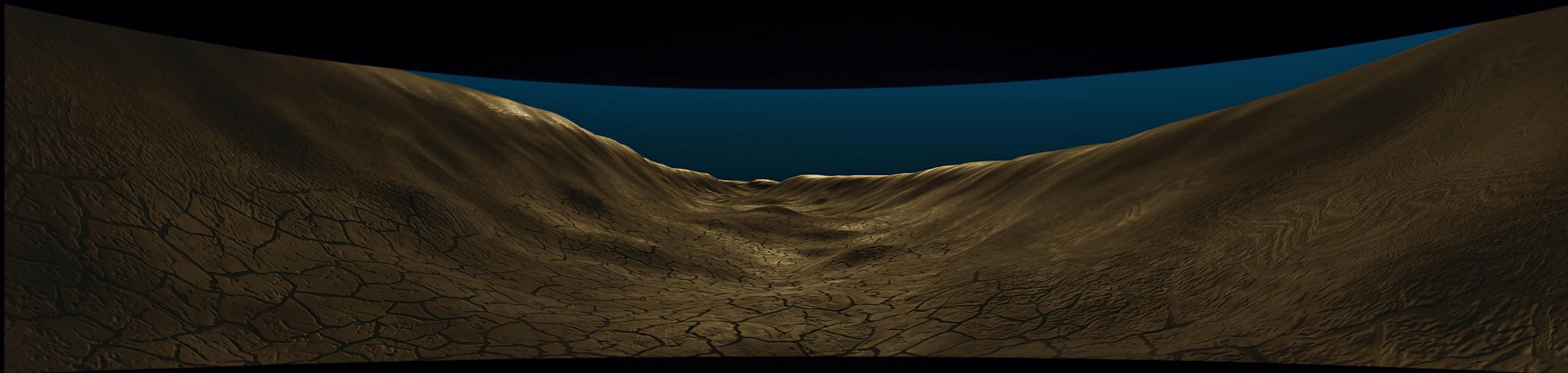
Al-Ani's installation *Timelines* (2022) was, like *The Visit* eighteen years before it, commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella, this time in collaboration with Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne. *Timelines* telescopes us back roughly one hundred years to a time when a first generation of military pilots were flying combat sorties, and when the map of the world was about to be redrawn by the victors of the Great War, resulting in nascent, artificially created nation-state entities such as Iraq. As panoramic as it is forensic, it combines the ocular and the historical, the geopolitical and the personal. Once again, a camera films from above, but this time what is pictured is not a landscape but an artefact. The artefact in question is an engraved metal tray, held in the collection of the V&A, that is said to depict scenes from Armistice Day 1918 in the Iraqi town of al-Hindiyyah. The surface of the tray is crowded with detail and packed with incident: the repercussions of a violent killing, a conspicuous show of military strength, streets full of wary soldiers and agitated civilians. An encapsulation of a particular colonial flashpoint, it might easily be an augury of turbulence yet to come.

Al-Ani accompanies a slow pan across the object's intricate surface with an affecting voiceover delivered by her mother, alluding to tensions during the family's time in Iraq, but also to the equally troubled situation in Ireland, where Ann Al-Ani's parents were born. Human lifetimes are only one moment in a long and extended historical timeline, but it is noticeable how frequently the same issues and dramas recur. Not long into the video's short duration, the camera starts to move – not upward this time, but in close. Hyper-magnified, the gouge of a line of engraving becomes the gorge of a dried-up riverbed; a raised curlicue becomes a dune or a mountain. We are back in a desert landscape, on a timeline

that suggests a mythic, adamantine past. Human stories, Al-Ani suggests, are inscribed in this landscape; like they always have been and always will be. Her personal, family story is just one of the many to write its name.

And stories like these often turn out to have an interesting or unexpected footnote. In the same way as Al-Ani's 'shadow sites' only show themselves under favourable conditions, her choice to spotlight the V&A tray in her installation has helped to illuminate some of its hidden history. Her deployment of it in her exhibition at the Towner alerted the great-grandson of a high-ranking British soldier, who had written about events at al-Hindiyyah in his letters. And now a recitation from some of those letters finds a place alongside Ann Al-Ani's own testimony in a new sound work that is a resonant addendum to *Timelines* – a voice and its echo, a viewpoint and its parallel, an image and its shadow.





Timelines  
2022, Panoramic Video Installation,  
Installation View Towner Eastbourne.  
Photo by Rob Harris

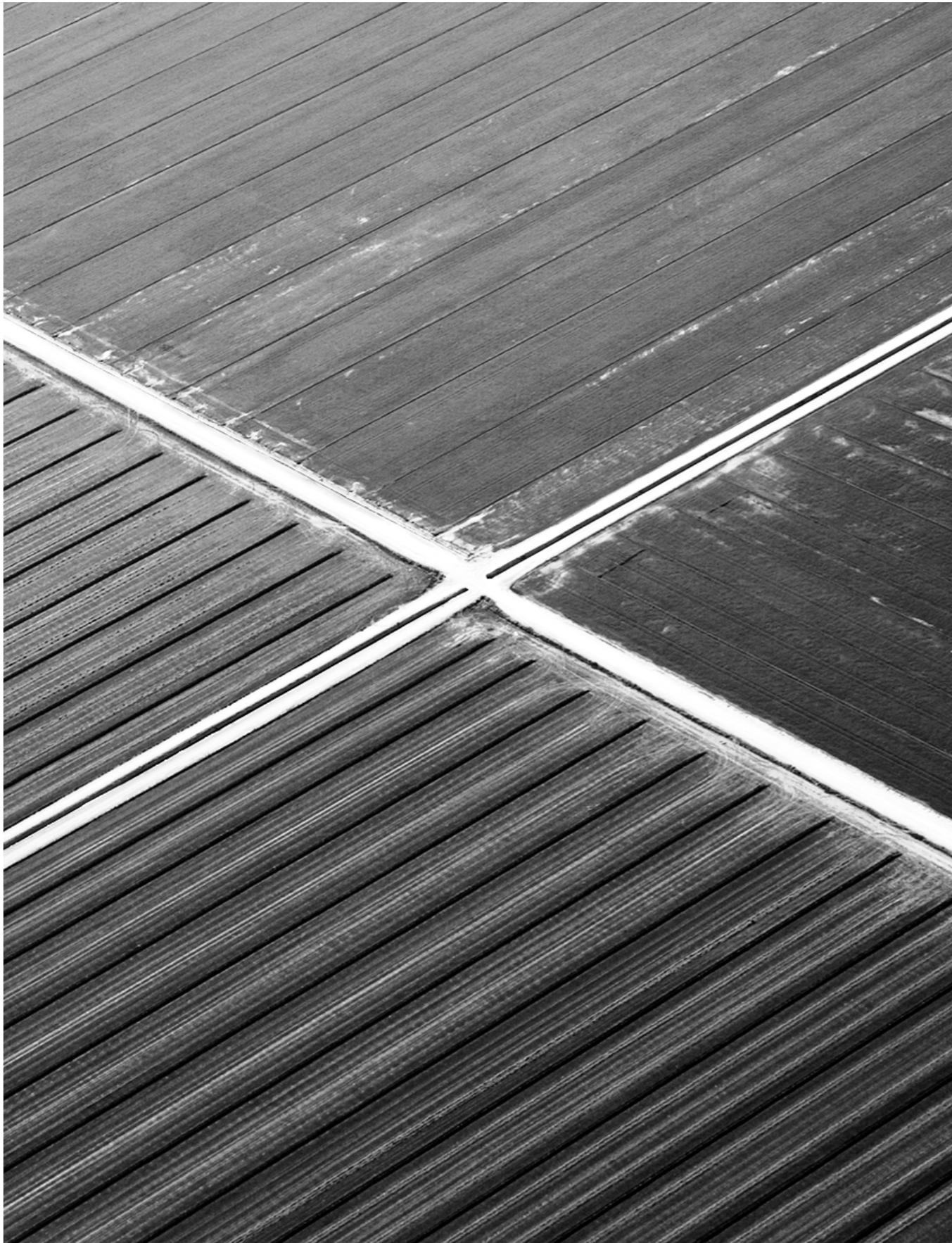




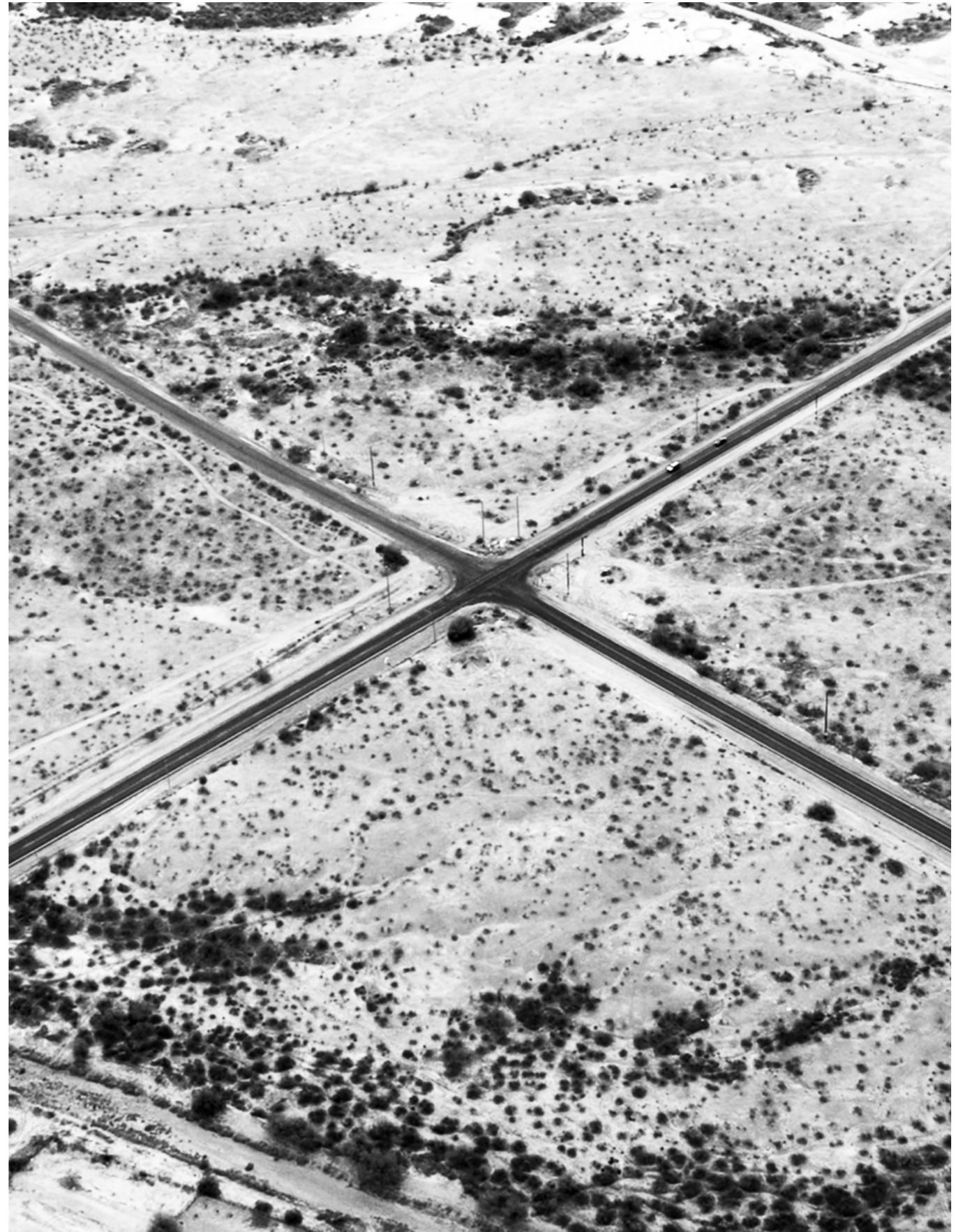
The Visit: Muse  
2004  
Digitised Super 16mm Film







Untitled (Target I), 2008, Archival Pigment Print



Untitled (Target V), 2008, Archival Pigment Print





# YOU TELL ME

by Jane Rendell

'You Tell Me'<sup>1</sup> is a topography which writes the sites of a series of thresholds – the boundary space of my engagement with the work of artist Jananne Al-Ani, whose work invited me in, drawing me close to tell me stories of places. Some I entered through my imagination, others by remembering, travelling back to my childhood in the Middle East. These were journeys both external and internal, they took me outside myself, offering new geographies, new possibilities, but they also returned me, altered, to myself, to my own biography.

The writing is configured as a travelogue that takes place at the frontier dividing inside and outside. It moves across this critical distance, the sites of private and public which separate and join critic and work, relating this motion to previous encounters back and forth. Here the italicised voice is taken from two other essays of mine: 'To Miss the Desert,' which was originally written in response to Nathan Coley's *Black Tent*, and 'Travelling the Distance/ Encountering the Other,' published in David Blamey's edited volume, *Here, There, Elsewhere*.<sup>2</sup> Both essays address the space of the relation between parent and child – Freud's 'fort/da', and Winnicott's 'transitional space' – through aspects of cultural difference, meditated through memories of my own childhood. The original version of 'You Tell Me' was written for *(Hi) story*: Jananne Al-Ani, Tracey Moffatt, Adriana Varejão and Richard Wentworth, an exhibition that took place in 2005 at Kunstmuseum, Thun. It was then reconfigured as 'Configuration 2: Back and Forth' for *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism*, performing, as I argue and show in that book, the act of artistic interpretation as a practice of configuration.<sup>3</sup>

Jane Rendell is Professor of Critical Spatial Practice at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. She has introduced concepts of 'critical spatial practice' and 'Site-Writing' through her authored books including *The Architecture of Psychoanalysis* (2017, I.B. Tauris); *Site-Writing* (2010, I.B. Tauris); and *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (2006, I.B. Tauris).

A multi-voiced approach is emblematic of my writing, which considers the practice of art and architectural criticism as a form of situated practice, that I call 'site-writing'.<sup>4</sup> Site-writing draws attention to the situatedness of critical writing and the roles sites play in the way writers – who might be artists, architects, critics, historians, theorists – position themselves and perform their acts of interpretation of works through writing *to*, *for*, and *with* others. The desire to work with variations in voice and style, both reflects and produces different spatial distances and proximities between works and texts, readers and writers, responding to differing positionalities.

She Said  
5 Channel Digital Video  
Installation, 2000



They tell each other stories, back and forth, from behind their hands, the words slip like cherries, full and glossy. They pass them from one to another.

Along the horizon he paces, back and forth, a tiny figure, smoking.

*Once the women were back at home, my father continued to traverse the drier areas of the globe.*

They speak of an absent man.

A tiny figure, smoking, on the dry crust of the earth.

*He is a hydrogeologist – a man who looks for water and brings it to the surface for people to wash and drink. He does this in lands that are not his own, that he was not raised in, that are strange to him and with people whose languages and customs are not kin, but that he has had to learn anew.*

Lips part and then come together. Words blow, in gusts.

On the dry crust of the earth, lacerated with cracks, scarred by the sun.

Lips part and then come together. Words blow, in gusts.

On the dry crust of the earth, lacerated with cracks, scarred by the sun.

*He is a man with property: land and wives. Inside the walls of his house are sunlit orchards full of dark purple fruit. Among the trees his wives sit. Dressed in shades of red, some of the women*

*have covered their faces, others have painted their toes nails pink. From a distance, the women watch them arrive, disappearing inside as they draw closer.*

Hands flicker. The patterns they gesture echo the flutter of speech.

Scarred by the sun, as the day shortens, his shadow grows longer.

*The guests are taken upstairs to a long veranda overlooking the garden. The only furniture here is the carpet laid out in a long line down the middle of the room. Men in turbans sit cross-legged along the edge and eat from the dishes laid out in front of them. They are invited to sit down and eat – the only women – her mother, her sister, herself.*

Or so she tells me.



She Said  
2000, 5 Channel Digital  
Video Installation



When I look at you, I see only a curtain of black obscuring your face.

I tell you a story *of how she taught the Sheik's niece English. She was allowed to go inside the harem, and saw that underneath their burqas the women wore make up and perfume. For her labours, she was offered a gift. She asked for a gold leaf burqa, the costume only the wives of the sheik can wear.*

I watch as you brush your hair. You drag the brush through the long dark strands, again and again.

*For her entrance, and her mother's bother, the sheik sends his apologies. 'Sorry', he said, 'so sorry it isn't a boy'. For a boy he would have sent a watch, but for the girl, a tiny gold coffee pot on a gold chain.*

I cannot see you, but from behind your veil of hair, you can see me.

*Born on the eve of the haj, I am a hajia. I will never have to make the journey to Mecca.*

Or so I tell you.

Untitled  
2002, digital video



I can see a man in the distance on the horizon. He approaches me to ask if he might be the odd man out. 'Why', I ask, 'do you think you are the odd man out, is it because you are only one man among so many women?' 'No', he says, 'I think it is because I speak without words: objects have their own stories to tell; once found, they can speak for themselves.' 'You are not the odd man out', I tell him, [...] these women also tell stories without words, they tell each other stories through places'.

You tell him your story.



The Visit: Muse  
2004, Digitised Super  
16mm Film

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Untitled I  
from the Series Portraits  
1999, Archival Chromogenic Print



In *On Histories and Stories*, writer A. S. Byatt examines her fascination with 'topological fictions', fictions where the term topological means 'both mathematical game-playing, and narratives constructed with spatial rather with temporal images'.<sup>5</sup>

She names certain works by Primo Levi, Italo Calvino and George Perec as the most interesting examples of this kind of writing. For me, these authors have different ways of making topological fictions, while Calvino often uses combination and permutation as strategies for constructing the shape of stories, Levi might draw on existing empirical structures, such as the elements, to determine the narrative, and Perec's detailed taxonomies of actual places are frequently re-organised to produce fictional spaces.<sup>6</sup> In discussing his own interest in 'topological fictions', Calvino refers to a review by Hans Magnus Enzensberger of labyrinthine narratives in the work of Jorge Luis Borges and Robbe Grillet, where Enzensberger describes how, by placing narratives inside one another these authors make places where it is easy to get lost.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of topological fiction is apparent in the works of Jananne Al-Ani [...] but in ways concerned with topography, the description of place, in addition to topology, the study of geometry properties. [...] There is an exploration of the spatial qualities of emotional tension and interpersonal communication through voice and echo in Al-Ani's work. *The Visit* (2004) relates *Muse*, where an isolated and mute male figure inhabits a flat desert plane, to *Echo*, the fragmented weave of four separate female voices (the artist and her three sisters),<sup>8</sup> a place where he is referred to, yet absent from. In *She Said* (2000) a phrase exchanged, whispered behind cupped hands, along a chain of five women, is rendered different through repetition, transformed through miscommunication, pointing to the gaps in listening and

slips in speaking.<sup>9</sup> Here the presence of another sounded through speech serves again as a reminder of what or who is not there.<sup>10</sup>

In several other works, Al-Ani also focuses on spaces – those chasms and frontiers – that bind and separate individuals.<sup>11</sup> In *Portraits* (1999) the women who cover their mouths with their hands sever lines of communication. A veil of hair brushed by the subject of the image in *Untitled* (2002) articulates the visual boundary or screen that occupies the place between the viewer and the brushing subject.<sup>12</sup>

In this increasingly globalized and conflicted world, the stories many artists and writers have been telling recently concern travel and the difficulties of movement and exchange: they tell us where they have come from, where they are going and what it is like along the way. These are stories about lives, yet despite the often powerful autobiographical elements, told as journeys, the narratives take spatial forms, actively referencing special places, generating situated dynamics through various voices, and inviting the reader or viewer to take up particular yet often ambiguous and changing positions in relation to the work.

1. This essay is configured of excerpts from Jane Rendell, 'Configuration 2: Back and Forth,' *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism*, (London: IB Tauris, 2010), selected and edited by Jananne Al-Ani.
2. Jane Rendell, 'To Miss the Desert', catalogue essay for artist Nathan Coley, *Black Tent*, edited and curated by Gavin Wade, Portsmouth Cathedral, (Art and Sacred Spaces: 2003) pp. 34–43 and Jane Rendell, 'Travelling the Distance/Encountering the Other', David Blamey (ed.) *Here, There, Elsewhere: Dialogues on Location and Mobility* (London: Open Editions, 2002), pp. 43–54.
3. Rendell, 'Configuration 2: Back and Forth,' *Site-Writing*, pp. 86–101.
4. See my earliest formulation Jane Rendell, 'Site-Writing,' in Sharon Kivland, Jaspar Joseph-Lester and Emma Cocker (eds) *Transmission: Speaking and Listening*, v. 4, (Sheffield Hallam University and Site Gallery, 2005), 169–76; a collection of my own essays and text-works in Rendell, *Site-Writing*, and a more recent site I have been curating of related situated, spatial and site-writings by others [Site-writing.co.uk](http://Site-writing.co.uk).
5. A. S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories* (London: Vintage, 2001) pp. 139–141.

6. See for example, Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (London: Penguin Books, 2000); Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (London: Vintage Classics, 1998); and Georges Perec, *Life: A User's Manual* (London: Collins Harvell, 1992).
7. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Topological Structures in Modern Literature' *Sur* (May–June 1966) referred to by Calvino in Italo Calvino, 'Cybernetics and Ghosts', *The Literature Machine* (London: Vintage, 1997) pp. 3–27, p. 25.
8. Al-Ani was born in Iraq to an British mother of Irish decent and an Iraqi father. The importance of the autobiographical aspect of her work is something the artist expresses ambivalence towards, stating both that the inclusion of family snapshots is an attempt to bring the body and 'a more complex historical narrative into the events of the first Gulf War', but also that the work is not 'personal narrative' and that the 'biographic specifics' are not important. Al-Ani is interested in how narratives shift in relation to history, and as Angela Weight has commented, in recognizing that 'memory is 'replete with lies and illusions'. See 'Richard Hylton interviews Jananne Al-Ani', *Jananne Al-Ani* (London: Film and Video Umbrella, 2005) n. p. and Angela Weight, 'After the Fog', *Jananne Al-Ani*, n. p. Claire Doherty compares Al-Ani's 'enigmatic use of her biography' literally and metaphorically to the veil. See Claire Doherty, 'The Triumph of Echo', *Jananne Al-Ani*, n. p.
9. Doherty describes how in *She Said* Al-Ani 'subverts linear narrative' and manipulates language to 'wrong-foot the narrative', and that her use of 'interruption, repetition and shifts in tone and expression' in the work prevent the story becoming sentimental. See Doherty, 'The Triumph of Echo', n. p.
10. Doherty notes that in Greek mythology Echo's punishment from Hera is that she will never again speak first, and that Echo is both audio receiver and transmitter. She argues that in Al-Ani's *Echo* 'the women can only refer ad *infinitum* to the absent male(s)'. See Doherty, 'The Triumph of Echo', n. p.
11. Maria Walsh discusses *The Visit* as 'a reflection on displacement' that positions the viewer in a 'liminal space between here and there'. She compares the gap between *Echo* and *Muse* to a 'barrier[s] that can never be crossed'. See Maria Walsh, 'Jananne Al-Ani: Tate Britain, London', *Art Monthly*, n. 285 (April 2005) pp. 24–25.
12. The veil has been a recurrent theme in Al-Ani's work. She outlines her own interest in the veil as a 'visual device', which allows one to contemplate the 'returned gaze' of women. See 'Richard Hylton interviews Jananne Al-Ani', n. p. For Steven Bode the veil in Al-Ani's work is a 'recurring formal device', which disguises and discloses. See Steven Bode, 'Foreword', *Jananne Al-Ani*, n. p. Doherty suggests that Al-Ani's fascination with the veil is as a 'metaphor for emotional candour and complex identity, rather than explicit cultural representation'. See Doherty, 'The Triumph of Echo', n. p. Al-Ani's interest in *the veil* is also evident in her role as co-curator of the exhibition *Veil*, with Zineb Sedira, David. A. Bailey and Gilane Tawadros shown at The New Art Gallery Walsall (2003), Bluecoat Gallery and Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool (2003) and Modern Art Oxford (2004) with an associated publication David A. Bailey and Gilane Tawadros (eds) *Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art* (inIVA and Modern Art Oxford, 2003).

From the Series Portraits  
1999, Archival Chromogenic Prints





■  
Untitled IV  
from the Series Portraits, 1999  
Archival Chromogenic Print

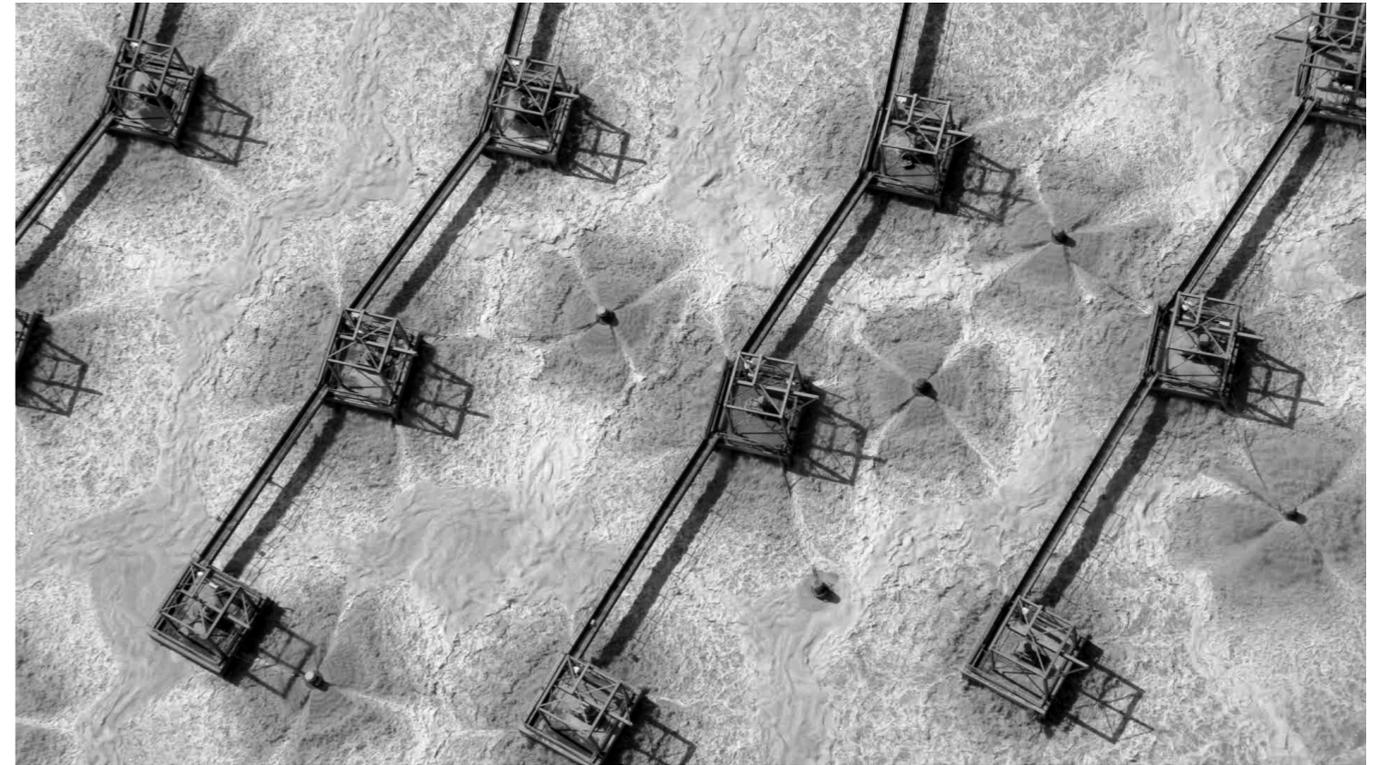
# CRIME SCENES

Jananne Al-Ani interviewed  
by Maria Walsh

*Art Monthly no. 455, April 2022*

Maria Walsh is Reader in Artists' Moving Image at Chelsea College of Arts. She is a writer and art critic, publishing books, peer-reviewed articles and magazine reviews on interrelations between moving image practices and feminist, psychoanalytic and philosophical theories of subjectivity. She is author of *Therapeutic Aesthetics: Performative Encounters in Moving Image Artworks* (2020/2022, Bloomsbury).

The Iraqi-born artist takes a forensic approach to landscapes and histories, challenging orientalist assumptions about the so-called Middle East and uncovering hidden evidence in museum objects and collections.



Still I from the film *Black Powder Peninsula*, 2016

Maria Walsh: Your work has always been concerned with questions about the gaze and the apparatuses of 'looking': from early photographic work and video installations featuring your mother and sisters to more recent films, such as *Shadow Sites I* and *Shadow Sites II*, from 2010 and 2011, and 2016's *Black Powder Peninsula*, which used drones, helicopters and aeroplanes to capture an aerial point of view of Middle Eastern and British landscapes. Your new film, *Timelines*, co-commissioned by FVU and the Towner Gallery, homes in on an object: a brass tray from Iraq held in the V&A collection. What attracted you to this object, and does your use of an object as a locus for storytelling mark a new phase of your work?

Still from the film Timeline  
2022, Panoramic Video Installation



Jananne Al-Ani: The idea of working with objects was sparked by an invitation from Sussan Babaie, the first historian of Islamic art to be appointed professor at the Courtauld. I was attending a lecture there and Sussan suggested I might be interested in an object in the collection: a piece of Islamic metalwork from the early 14th century. I know very little about Islamic metalwork but was intrigued, so I went to see the object, which is known as the 'Courtauld Bag' because it looks a bit like a handbag. My first view of it was under a microscope as it was being cleaned by a conservator in preparation for the Courtauld Gallery exhibition 'Court and Craft: A Masterpiece from Northern Iraq'. The bag is made of brass, inlaid with gold and silver and highly decorated with hunting and feasting scenes. Looking at it under the microscope, however, I got really excited because the surface seemed to have been magically transformed into a landscape. The edges of its elaborate patterns had become much more jagged and it felt as if I was looking down at canyons or river valleys from an aerial perspective.

The story of the bag's origins was also intriguing. It is thought to have been made for a noble woman of the Mongol Court around 1300 in Mosul, which was conquered shortly after Baghdad. The great cosmopolitan city at the heart of the Abbasid Caliphate had been sacked and destroyed by the Mongols in 1258. So, the bag was made in the wake of this incredibly tumultuous, violent period. In a way it's a hybrid object, made by highly skilled local metalworkers for what we might now think of as an occupying power, combining iconography and design elements common to Islamic metalworking traditions with elements reminiscent of Chinese textile design and pattern.

The bag was acquired by the Victorian collector Thomas Gambier Parry in 1858, probably in Venice, and was gifted to the Courtauld by his grandson in 1966. Yet nothing at all is known of the bag's whereabouts for the 500 years or so before it turned up in Italy in the mid 19th century. I began to think of the bag as a time traveller, popping up unexpectedly in a great western museum collection, out of time and place.

But to answer the question about how I came to focus on the tray in *Timelines*, I was giving a lecture at the V&A about my aerial works and Tim Stanley, curator of the Middle Eastern collection, approached me after the talk and asked if I would be interested in seeing an object in the collection, a brass tray that had been made in Iraq sometime after 1918 which had First World War biplanes represented on it. He told me a great story about how he had been snooping in the stores at Blythe House and came across it by chance. This was in the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War. It was only after he had drawn attention to it that the tray's acquisition was properly completed. Apparently, it had arrived in the collection when a gallery attendant called Mr Bing, whom nobody seems to know anything more about, donated it on his retirement.

I was really excited by it because although the Arabic text on the tray says it shows Armistice Day in 1918, with people returning to the Iraqi town of al-Hindiyyah, waving flags, apparently surrendering after the end of hostilities, I think it also illustrates the subsequent revolt which erupted once it became clear that the British were not going to deliver the independence they had promised but instead were planning to stay on as an occupying force.



Installation view of *Timelines*  
2022, Panoramic Video  
Installation, Towner Eastbourne.  
Photo by Rob Harris

## What makes you think this?

The tray depicts two very dense crowd scenes divided by the river Euphrates, which cuts across its centre. In among the Arab men and women are British soldiers in smart uniforms accompanied by cannon and armoured vehicles and, although it looks like a jolly, festive occasion, if you look closely, you can see a man being led to the gallows on a donkey before being hanged. It is clear from the text pinned to his chest that he has killed a major in the British army. The 1920 Iraqi Revolt posed a serious threat to plans to create the modern state of Iraq under a British mandate, which was necessary if the British were to retain control of oil production in the region. Had it not been for the use of airpower to crush the rebellion and attack civilian targets – a form of modern warfare ‘pioneered’ by the British in Iraq – the revolt may well have succeeded, and the history of the modern Middle East would have looked very different today.

I like to think that the artist who worked on the tray was being rather subversive by making what was supposed to be a celebration of the end of the First World War into an unofficial record of the atrocities committed by the British in their need to crush the revolt and maintain control of what became the modern state of Iraq. So, like the Courtauld bag, the V&A tray seems to have been in limbo for a period before appearing in the collection, like a time traveller, to tell us more about a historic moment of rupture or violence that has been overlooked or forgotten.

What you have said reminds me of film theorist Laura U Marks’s use of the term ‘recollection-object’, which has to do with how material objects or artefacts might activate encounters with cultural absences that allow for the past to be differently remembered and

narrated. Telling stories is something that often features in your work. As well as the voice-over in *Timelines*, which I’ll come back to, the ‘filming’ of the tray itself is a narrative of sorts. Each of the four sequences begins with a close-up view of the object’s surface that then transforms into a different 3D aerial landscape, each sequence progressing towards the final denouement. At the risk of creating a spoiler, I found this final sequence of flying through the canyon and into the horizon thrilling, and I stayed to watch repeatedly. As the film is projected on a large, curved screen spanning the gallery, it’s almost as if the viewer is given the first-person frontal view in videogame space, the difference being that in a videogame you can control it with a stick but here – and this is quite scary – you are being controlled.

The film is just over nine-minutes long and has been edited to loop seamlessly, so I’m really pleased to hear that you interpreted the canyon sequence as the last of the four chapters. It is in fact the final scene if you were to watch the film from the beginning. I’m also glad you found it thrilling because for me that was always the most important shot. I had lots of conversations early on in the development of the film with CG and 3D specialists about how to make it technically. I wanted to be able to ‘fly’ over the surface of the tray as if it were a 3D landscape and then drop down and get right inside one of the engraved lines, for it to be transformed into a gully or a canyon, something on a really epic scale.

We carried out a test shoot early on using an 8K video camera and the best macro lenses we could get hold of, but it was not possible to get close enough to the surface of the tray. In the end, all four of the ‘landscape’ shots were made using only super high-resolution photographs that were imported into CG software

to create 3D renderings of the surface of the tray which we could then artificially light, fly over and film.

I also wanted to suggest different types of landscapes, so in addition to the dry riverbed or canyon at the end of the film, the first sequence features a watery river-like texture, then a mountain range appears at the end of the second sequence, and in the third we zoom in on the hanging man's eye until it becomes abstracted and starts to look a bit like an archaeological site seen from above.

Black Powder Peninsula  
2016, Installation View, Towner Eastbourne  
Photo by Rob Harris



Each of the sequences starts with the very graphic, almost cartoonish imagery on the tray, showing Arab men and women and British troops crowded together. It reminded me of the Assyrian friezes in the British Museum, showing epic battle scenes, which I love. The format of the friezes, in long continuous strips, and the proportions of the river, which cuts across the tray, influenced my decision to make the film panoramic in format with a ratio of approximately 1:5. I had in mind both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which are so vital in making the landscape of Iraq as rich and varied as it is, with mountains in the north and east, fertile agricultural land between the rivers and marshes in the south. Turning the flat metallic surface of the tray into a territory that's evocative of the Iraqi landscape is in part a reference to my earlier preoccupation in the 'Shadow Sites' films of challenging orientalist representations of the Middle Eastern landscape as a barren desert.

As well as the image narration and the accompanying sounds of planes, gunfire, wind, water etc, the other storytelling mode is the voice-over, which comprises poetic fragments spoken by a woman with an English accent. We know from the press release that the woman is your mother and that the fragments are drawn from interviews you did with her about her memories of 'growing up in Britain as the child of Irish immigrants' as well as later living in Iraq. How did you go about selecting these sections of speech and is this a longer project?

It is, yes. My mother is part of a small community of women in the UK who met and fell in love with young Iraqi men who were studying on scholarships in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Many married and moved to Iraq, started families there and inadvertently





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Aerial I Production still  
from the film Shadow Sites II, 2011  
Archival Chromogenic Print

Aerial IV still  
from the film Shadow Sites II  
2011



Aerial III still  
from the film Shadow Sites II  
2011

became witnesses to the political turmoil that followed the 1958 revolution to overthrow the British-backed monarchy that had been installed in the early 1920s after the suppression of the revolt. As the situation in Iraq went from bad to worse, the eight-year Iran/Iraq war being followed closely by the 1991 Gulf War, the women gradually returned to the UK, with some only leaving after the 2003 war. I had originally planned to interview as many of the women as possible and then use the interviews in the same way I had in earlier works, like *A Loving Man* from 1996–99 and *She Said* from 2000, as material either for voice-overs or to be revoiced by others, but the pandemic put a stop to that and, in the end, I decided to focus on my mother's story. I did a short course on how to conduct oral history interviews and over a period of three months I met my mother online once a week and asked her to talk about her life, from her earliest memories as a child to the present. In total I had almost 12 hours of recordings from which I extracted the short phrases I have used as the narration for *Timelines*.

My mother comes from a family of ten children, my father from a family of nine, so we have an enormous extended family and there are lots and lots of great family stories. I have always been interested in how stories, both intimate family stories and wider political narratives, shift and transform over time. Also, I thought I knew all my mother's stories but there was something about the formality of the oral history interview and the time she had between sessions to mull over what had been said the previous week which led to her telling me a couple of stories I hadn't heard before. One of those was a memory of her hiding under the stairs in the family house in Manchester during air raids. In the film, when she talks about the aeroplanes coming, she is

talking about her first-hand experience during the Second World War, but for me it echoed the stories of aerial attacks by the British in Iraq in 1920 as well as the intense use of airpower in both the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars. She also told me about a march she went on with the rest of the Irish community in Manchester Everybody was dressed in their finest clothes, there was music, and they walked to Strangeways Prison where there were speeches. As a small child she had no idea what the speeches were about, but from what I have been able to piece together it seems likely it was a commemoration of the lives of three Irish nationalists who were publicly hanged in Manchester in 1867 for killing a British policeman. They became known as the Manchester Martyrs. Quite an extraordinary story considering the image of the hanged man in the tray.

[That's so interesting because, when she alludes to 'the rebels' over footage of one of the crowd sequences, I did wonder whether she was referring to Irish or Iraqi rebels.](#)

Or rebels anywhere. In fact, the story she is referring to in that section relates directly to the war of independence in Ireland. I felt it was important to include it because the Iraqi Revolt and the Irish War of Independence were taking place at exactly the same time. By 1921, Ireland had been partitioned and Mandatory Iraq had been created under British administration. Air power continued to be used in Iraq for many years after that to quell resistance across the country. Although the mandate came to an end in 1932, the British maintained influence and control via the monarchy they had installed until the 1958 revolution. My father had studied engineering in the UK and by the time I was born he was working for the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) when it was nationalised in

1972. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which later became British Petroleum, had been a major shareholder in the IPC and built a large refinery on the Isle of Grain in Kent that features in my film *Black Powder Peninsula*, also on display at Towner alongside 'Bringing to Light'.

I would like to come back to 'Bringing to Light', your curatorial selection of works from the Towner collection, but firstly I'd like to know more about the importance of installation space to your films, especially to the single-screen works.

The 'Shadow Sites' films are shown in a tunnel-like space with a built-in ceiling that slopes down to meet the top of the projection, and the films sit floor-to-ceiling wall-to-wall, contained by the space. Both *A Loving Man* and *She Said* are five-channel works, installed in a dark circular space, with the monitors embedded in the wall, placing the viewer at the centre of the work. I want the audience to be active not passive, in the way a cinema audience might be. I don't want people to sit and simply receive the work.

I want them to have more of a bodily encounter with it. Although it's possible to sit and watch *Timelines*, I hope the shape of the curved screen, the scale of the projection and the camera movements in the film altogether generate a physical sensation so it's not just your eyes and your mind that are stimulated, but your body is also getting something out of the encounter.

During one of the landscape sequences in *Timelines*, I had the sensation of moving in an elevator. During another, I had the sensation you get when you are sitting on a stationary train and you think it's moving but it's actually the adjacent trains. I found

those contradictory phenomenological experiences interesting.

Yes, they're optical illusions but they are very powerful ones. You can feel them in your body and that's why I very rarely show my films online, on a small screen or as part of a screening programme. It means fewer opportunities to exhibit, but I insist. For me the work only exists when it is encountered in the space of the gallery. People have told me they've experienced something close to vertigo, feeling a bit like they are falling into the screen when watching *Shadow Sites II*, which is edited as one long continuous zoom, whereas in *Shadow Sites I* the film falls down the screen continuously like a waterfall and can sometimes make people feel unsteady or slightly nauseous.

But that's good though, isn't it?

Yes, I think it is, because it can make the space itself feel less solid. To go back to your earlier comment about videogame space, I'm also hoping it might make the viewer feel they are taking the position of the operator or the pilot, to offer them a bit more agency so they have a role to play or some degree of control in their encounter with the work. What I was really keen to avoid, though, was the flattened smooth look of virtual gaming space. I didn't want it to look like a computer-generated landscape. I wanted it to be something much more refined. The surfaces in *Timelines* are really important and we had to be careful when moving in really close to the tray, adding more detail and 'grit' where needed, so as to avoid things looking too 'digital' in the way so many CG environments do.

Would you say you have brought some form of indexicality to the moving image? For example, in *Shadow Sites I* and *II*,

the traces of the archaeological sites that appear when the sun goes down are almost physical in their evocation of inhabitation.

I'm not sure about that, but the idea of latency is important in the work. Kitty Hauser talks about how the latent image of the foundations of an archaeological site can be exposed through aerial archaeology, whether it is temporarily revealed as a shadow site or a crop site. Which also links to forensics, the fact that if you disrupt virgin ground by digging a hole, that hole will always be visible, even if you immediately backfill it, and it's much longer-lasting than a fingerprint or a blood stain. I'm interested in the idea of using the landscape as a crime scene, a place where evidence has been deposited. And it's the same with objects in museum collections. They hold evidence or hidden information that we need to decipher like a Rosetta Stone. Collections provide a record of the preoccupations and desires of those who were here before us, they also reflect the economic and political conditions of the time, both at an individual and institutional level. So many different factors affect the way collections are built.

Was selecting the works in 'Bringing to Light' fun?

It was a real pleasure. It was quite a challenging thing to do under lockdown conditions and I think I would have spent more time in the stores if it had been possible, so I relied heavily on the collections curator Karen Taylor, who knows the collection really well. I also worked closely with Towner curators Noelle Collins and Emily Medd, who were very supportive throughout and a great help when it came to hanging the show. There is a strong emphasis on landscape in the collection as well as a growing body of contemporary lens-based works, so that helped me select works that could be in conversation with each other but in subtle ways.

It is beautifully installed. I love the way the circular vitrine displaying the actual brass tray echoes the circular column on top of which your 2010 film *Excavators* is shown. Looking down at the ants in the film made me feel very small. It was as if humans had disappeared, and termites had taken over the earth.

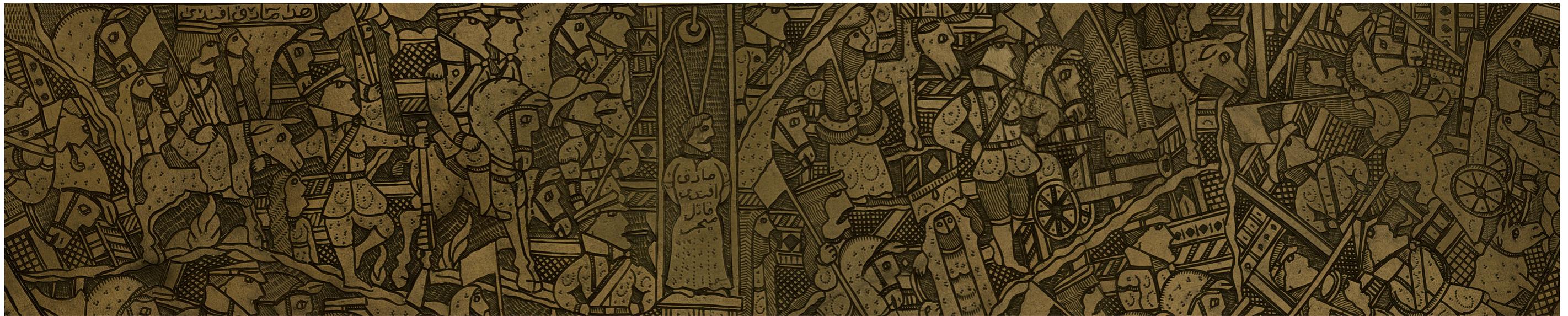
They are the only 'living things' in the space. All that's left are the insects, which will probably be the case, won't it?

Black Powder Peninsula, Bringing To Light  
Installation View, 2016, Towner Eastbourne  
Photo by Rob Harris

Still from the Film  
Black Powder Peninsula, 2016







**She Said**

Extracts from a series of interviews conducted in 2021 with the artist's mother. She lived in Iraq from 1964 to 1980

Extracts from letters written by a British Political Officer to his wife. He was stationed in Iraq from 1917 to 1925



There was this beautiful, beautiful river  
A very dangerous river  
With swift currents  
A very dangerous place  
Very deep water

They were very politically aware  
They felt they were living under a repressive regime.  
They were all part of an underground movement  
They were very optimistic  
It was wonderful  
The hope and the promise  
And then what happened afterwards was so bad

Everywhere there were guards  
Secret police on the streets watching  
They did not want to be seen  
Some of his relatives had been shot by the British  
Him and the other rebels were armed  
They chased this policeman  
And he got caught between these rebels and was shot  
They were hung  
Some men had been hung  
They were hung under this bridge

When the aeroplanes came  
It made me realise that the situation was very volatile  
There was a lot more tension everywhere  
People were really worried  
All those places have been devastated  
That was very sad  
It was just for everybody, utterly horrendous  
They've seen such dreadful things  
They've been through things that we haven't  
Such sadness

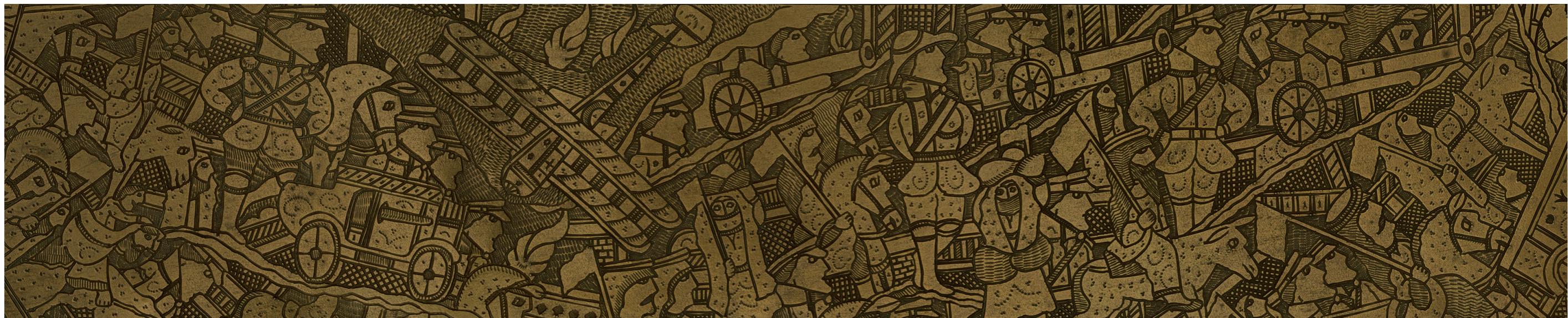
We are on the Tigris  
We reached the river bank  
And found the bridge burning  
A party of machine guns and sappers came up  
We killed not less than 200

I have absolutely no qualifications for political work  
I am a stranger in a strange land  
The people hate us and hope that the tribes will mop us up  
The whole country is falling on evil days  
I saw armed tribesmen and emptied my revolver into them  
They are the sort of people  
Who would sooner part with their eyes than their rifles

There is fighting all over the place  
I have made an example of two people  
I had one of them flogged in the market place  
And sentenced an old man to a year's imprisonment  
I had him tied up and beaten  
And sent to Baghdad in heavy chains  
We got fired on  
Another officer murdered  
By God this man must be hanged  
He well deserves what he has got

I saw two airmen. Wonderful fellows!  
The town has surrendered the persons we wanted  
Planes went over to bomb it this morning  
We managed to stop four of them  
But I'm afraid one went on...  
The people were really frightened, poor things.  
The people know me and I know them and I've got to like the place  
It is a very dangerous policy in the East to rely on the goodwill of the people  
I have grown to be a pessimist with regard to the future of Mesopotamia  
Please keep all I say to yourself

**He Said**



# HOW MANY SKIES HAVE FALLEN

Michael Guida

The land has been marked, over and over again. It is a process of rewriting. A scuff, a tentative footprint. A byway marked out. Then a hay field, fortress, canal or a parade of shops. Time tells what these marks mean, but the marks themselves have to bow to the weight of time, the pull of time. This is another process, which is not just to do with the weather and the formation of ruins.

As one monument is superseded by another the layers continue to converse. A kind of atmospheric archive of what has happened remains in play. Ploughmen, diviners, historians, and anyone else for that matter, know this and can feel it. A common knowledge of animal, vegetable and mineral events forever combine and recombine in grace and in violence. There it is – the story of what has been done, what we have done.

Al-Ani's work draws us down to contemplate from above what we have done with the land we live on. Looking down like this, onto the land, into the land, requires a good head for heights. There is a sense of power in the aerial perspective – the view of the flyer, the hawk or of God – but this work pulls at us, over and over, like gravity. There is a sense of falling to earth even though the images are not really moving. There is in fact in each short sequence a fall through eighty years of East Anglian landscape history shot from above. Archive photographs of Second World War airfields are slowly squashed by contemporary colour field systems and their meeting provokes close scrutiny as the past bleaches into the present.

Pleasing arrangements of sharp runway systems dominate each newly made aerodrome. A strong perimeter has been etched out of the surrounding agricultural patchwork to contain a technical set-up that appears to levitate with purpose. The straight-line rationality of criss-crossing tarmac buzzes against suggestive

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Archival Aerial Photographs  
1948  
Courtesy of The Eric Boulton Archive

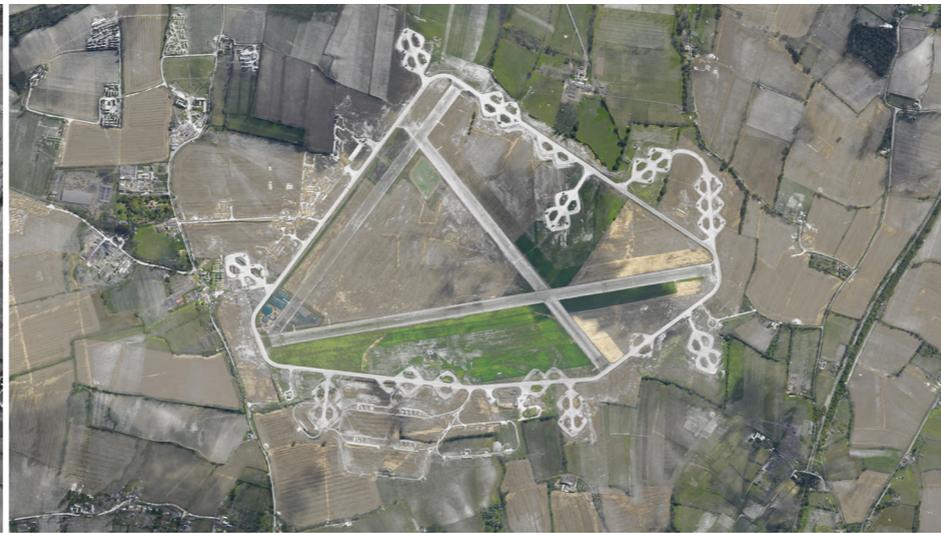
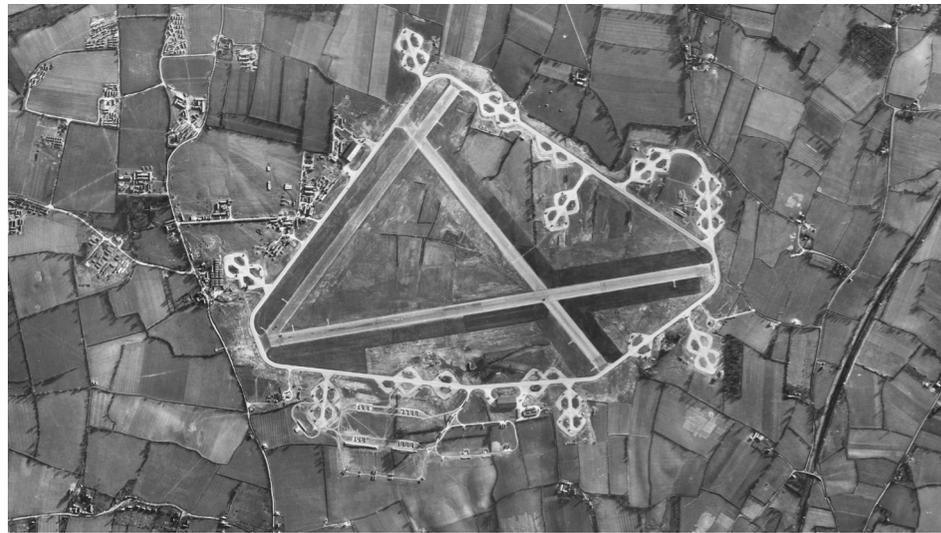
occult symbols, or are these messages for extra-terrestrials? The now defunct geometries have of course been taken over by new countryside, except they have not. Runways become field boundaries or continue to shadow through the wheat. Looping perimeter fences persist. Often a big triangular field is born out of the middle of the old airfield and lives on as a centre piece of golden wheat and maize. There is in these fresh colour landscapes an invitation to explore the hidden patterns in the hedgerows on foot. On the ground, the old tracings may have been lost to sight, but they are there still, under the nose. One wants to parachute down into those three-sided fields and tramp around the edges where rusted metal is hidden by dog's-tail grass. Or meander like the writer W.G. Sebald among the sultry waterways and disused railway lines, sensitised as the German was to traces of destruction reaching deep into the past, when Norfolk and Suffolk were covered in dense unbroken waves of oak and elm.

But Al-Ani's showreel of land transformations is not a picnic in the countryside nor an aesthetic catalogue of change from war to peace. Each example is accompanied by a terrible and repetitive soundtrack of monstrous engines, sirens, gun fire, bomb detonations and sometimes indecipherable noise. These are the sounds of the bombing war. We are with American metal: B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators, their bomb bays bursting full for German cities. We take off, clear the murk of the North Sea, come under fire, return fire, release bombs and hear them drop. We shudder when it is over, but not for long. The air quickly fills with the uncanny voices of birds that have for millennia occupied the flatlands of English landscape: skylark, song thrush, linnet, blackbird, wood pigeon, house sparrow, robin, stonechat, great tit, goldcrest, wren, chiffchaff, reed warbler, greenfinch, blackcap. And

the throb of a nightingale. They seem to sing out an insult after the violence. Their chatter and musicality sound unhinged. Silence is the right response after war. At least a moment of reflection. Knowing that so many of these species are decimated today, their voices come with irony and nostalgia gone wrong. The wonder and privilege of a bird's-eye view has been spoiled.

Stills from the film *Sounds of War II*  
(USAAF Rattlesden)  
2023, Digital Video





Stills from the film *Sounds of War II*  
(USAAF Wormingsford), 2023  
Digital Video

In the summer of 1943, John Steinbeck visited a US bomber station in East Anglia to meet the airmen on the ground. In a single field he saw ready twenty-five Flying Fortresses, the four-engine heavy bombers that worked at high altitude. Their noses had been painted with names like Bomb Boogie (from St Louis), Mary Ruth (Wichita) and Volga Virgin (Davenport). He saw them gather overhead into V formation, 'going south like geese in the fall'. Left behind in the quiet of the barracks were photographs and wedding rings and pin ups, waiting next to bunk beds left unmade. Steinbeck had glimpsed one of the sixty-seven airfield operations of the American Eighth that in the course of one thousand and nine days dropped seven hundred and thirty-two thousand tons of bombs, lost almost nine thousand aircraft and fifty thousand men.

Al-Ani's perspective denies access to the human detail on the ground. The effect is unnerving. There might be some tiny aircraft on the runways, perhaps some ground crew, but there is no comfort in the locked geometry of her unforgiving vertical viewpoint. We are stuck, face down. In a quite different aesthetic and political approach, Paul Nash's 1941 painting 'Battle of Britain' offers a much more familiar aspect of aerial warfare, looking out across the Thames estuary, southward towards the continent on the horizon. The success of the RAF's early defence of the skies with Spitfires and Hurricanes is written in curvaceous contrails against a blue sky. The scene still pleases. More so in 1942 when Nash's official war artistry was quickly promoted to display in the National Gallery. But it's a sunlit depiction that celebrates a little too much.

Looking up, not down, became an everyday mode of gauging the safety of the skies in the airwar. In the years before the

conflict prime minister Stanley Baldwin had told the populace there was no greater fear than 'fear of the air'. There would be no escape from aerial bombing many believed. The 1936 film *Things to Come*, based on an H.G. Wells novel, opened with central London under air attack on Christmas eve. During the war Paul Nash made vivid the fear in the air: 'suddenly the sky was upon us like a huge hawk hovering, threatening'. A telling change in national attention and the culture of observation was marked by the publication of the Observer's book of 'airplanes' in 1942, which took over from earlier editions about British birds, wildflowers and butterflies. A bird on the wing meant something different now. How could it not when several million citizens took to studying the new silhouettes overhead in R.A. Saviile-Sneath's book *Aircraft Recognition*, issued in orange Penguin paperback. All the while the professional eyes of the Observer Corps scanned the sky day and night. These new styles of looking were a wartime duty as well as a nervous reaction. When magazine covers and government posters showed anti aircraft crews addressing the skies with vigilance, these depictions also showed British faces looking up to a brighter future.





Still from the film Sounds of War II (USAAF Knettishall)  
2023, Digital Video



In her disquieting narrative staccatos, Al-Ani's re-writing of the land also pushes onward towards a brighter future. The land marked out for war is taken over by modern pastoral production. The evidence of conflict may be indelible but what comes next is good. Anyway, it was the war that brought these fields back to life. Hidden reserves of fertility were released by machines (tractors, ploughs, planters, reapers, rollers, gyrotillers). Power came to the land. The Women's Land Army came to the land. A new agricultural fountainhead brought forth a golden age of wheat and meat that we still live now. The revelation of today's fieldworks is mesmerising.

Yet the future is in question. As lush blocks of gold and green rise up and assert themselves, slick arrays of solar panels take up occupation at the same time. We realise there has been no simple transition from darkness to light, no nature cure. The airfields have not been replaced by fecund rurality, but by complex technical apparatus sucking away at the sun. Nature is not richly resurgent as it seemed to be in the stories of city bombsites after the war where yellow coltsfoot quickly poked through the rubble. Instead, gravity, wind, weather, soil and the natural histories of plant and animal life have been bent to human service. All the arsenal of the military-industrial-complex is here, the international power systems of conflict, energy and food united. The authorship of the land is not ours. The stain in the land, the blood in the soil of this storied ground, lives in a set of troubling political tapestries – this is what Al-Ani gives us.

It was in the midst of the Second World War that John Betjeman wrote with disgust: 'Oh bountiful Gods of the air! Oh Science and Progress! You great big wonderful world! Oh what have you done?'



(USAAF Kingscliffe)

### ***Black Powder Peninsula***

2016, 4 minutes 28 seconds  
Single-channel digital video

Produced with support from Arts Council England and King's Culture  
First shown in Traces of War, curated by Cécile Bourne-Farrell and Vivienne Jabri  
King's College London, Inigo Rooms, Somerset House, London

Cinematography: Noski Deville  
Producer: Maggie Warwick  
Specialist Aerial Camera Operator: David McKay  
Helicopter Pilot: Ian Evans  
Drone Operators: Grey Moth (Daniel Hollowell and Archie Sinclair)  
Sound Design: Ross Adams  
Editor: Sue Giovanni  
Logistical Support: Paul Britten, Rochester Airport  
Paul Starling, Martyn Terry  
Monica Wyer, Flying TV

Special thanks to:  
John, Sean and Debbie Lynott  
Bob Bewley, Wayne Cocroft,  
Jim Gardner, Kent Film Office, Kent Wildfowlers Association, Medway County Council, Peel Ports

### ***Groundworks III***

2013, 10 second loop, Digital Video

Produced with support from Future Art Research at the Arizona State University and the Sharjah Art Foundation.

Aerial Photography: Jananne Al-Ani  
Pilot: John Raatz  
Logistical Support: Marilu Knode and Sarah Munter  
Editor: Sue Giovanni  
Special thanks to: Norah Al-Ani

### ***Sounds of War II***

2023, 14 minutes 24 seconds  
Single-channel digital video

Produced with support from University of the Arts London, London College of Communication

Aerial Photography: Ian Leslie, High Level Photography  
Pilots: Sarfraz-ul Haque and James Garnett  
Picture Research: Angus Boulton  
Editorial Assistance: Suky Best  
Post-Production (Stills): Oliver Goodrich and Brian Voce  
Sound Design: Ross Adams  
Editor: Sue Giovanni

Special thanks to:  
Bob Bewley and Brenda Marks  
Wayne Cocroft and Lucinda Walker, Historic England, Zaid Al-Ani, Nuha Ali and Timothy Saunders

### ***The Visit***

2004, Video installation in two parts:

*Muse*, 2004  
15 Minutes, Digitised Super 16mm Film

*Echo*, 1994/2004  
10 Minutes, VHS/Digital Video

Commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella and Norwich Gallery  
Supported by Arts Council England, Film London and the Henry Moore Foundation

Cinematography: Noski Deville  
First Assistant Camera: Peter Emery  
Stills Photography: Effie Paleologou  
Editor: Bevis Bowden  
Unit Driver/Production Assistant: Kamil Ahmed Ali  
Performers: Jananne, Nadia, Norah, Shatha and Subhi Al-Ani

Special thanks to:  
Wijdan Ali, Noor Al Qasimi, Raed Asfour, Maggie Ellis, Malu Halasa, Farhan Halasa, Azza Hammoudi, Serene Huleileh, Rose Issa, Joumana Kawar, Jack Persekian, Ra-ey Saleh and Gary Thomas

# JANANNE AL-ANI

Born in 1966 in Kirkuk, Iraq  
works in London, United Kingdom

Al-Ani is an artist, researcher and lecturer working with photography, film and video. She studied Fine Art at the Byam Shaw School of Art and graduated with an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art. Al-Ani has had solo exhibitions at Towner Eastbourne; Beirut Art Center; National Museum of Asian Art, Washington DC; Imperial War Museum, London; Darat al Funun, Amman; and Art Now: Tate Britain, London.

Recent group exhibitions include Air, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; Trembling Landscapes, Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam; Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991-2011, MoMA PS1, New York; A Stitch in Time, Today Museum, Beijing; Please Come Back. The World as Prison? MAXXI, Rome; Film as Place, SFMOMA, San Francisco; A Bird's Eye View of the World, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima. She has participated in the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial; 11th Sharjah Biennial; 13th Istanbul Biennial; 18th Biennale of Sydney; and the 54th Venice Biennale. Her work can be found in collections including the V&A, London; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna.

Al-Ani is a trustee of The Photographers' Gallery, London and a general assembly member of Mophradat, Brussels/Athens. She is Reader in Photography and Moving Image and Senior Lecturer in Photography at the University of the Arts London.

