GHASAN SAAID
25 MAY - 28 JUNE 2020
REVEALING AND CONCEALED

PEACOCK GALLERY AND AUBURN ARTS STUDIO
Cumberland City Council’s Peacock Gallery is hosting Revealing and Concealing, an exhibition by artist Ghasan Saaid, in Gallery One and online via our Arts in Cumberland webpage. We would like to acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on Darug land and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

In Revealing and Concealing Ghasan explores the intimate complexities of refugee survivor torture, trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder through diverse material form. His work stimulates peculiar sensibilities by placing familiar objects in unexpected situations, separating the viewer from their everyday 'life' as normal.

In Ghasan’s piece Resistance, a decorative chandelier at first glance looks like it has broken onto a slab of cement. However, upon further inspection the once fluid cement instead seems to subsume the chandelier to a certain point. Held in place at an odd angle, the chandelier continues to function as a light piece, resisting the totality of the cement grey absorption.

Ghasan’s work invites us to reflect on and be aware of the lived experiences of survivor trauma, and of the nuanced complexities that people from refugee backgrounds experience in regard to resettlement, loss of cultural identity and mental health distress. As a whole, the exhibition asks us to hold open a gentle space for these diverse experiences so that healing can be enabled.

Cumberland City Council and the Peacock Gallery team would like to thank all the creatives and Council staff who have supported the development of this exhibition. We extend a warm invite to the local community to enjoy the online presentation of Ghasan’s work and hope that his insightful reflections transform us all.

Kristina Tito
Arts and Cultural Projects Producer
Cumberland City Council

Throughout my ongoing art practice and investigation, I am pursuing a very personal obsession of creating narrative scenarios in a different format. In this project, I’m using different art forms and materials, reflecting uncanny ideas, reshaping and twisting familiar information and objects to be seen and observed as unfamiliar, to tackle and to evoke issues in our contemporary society. This makes the artwork simultaneously an exploration and a deconstruction of nostalgia.

We create our own past from fragments of reality in a process that combines the intentional aspects of remembering and forgetting with the unpredicted and unconscious. I aim to make artworks to evince a preoccupation with the phenomena of making the familiar strange and metaphorical, whilst demonstrating the procedure that forms our inner scenery.

During the time we live in, we have heard and witnessed an outstanding amount of distressing news of human rights violations experienced by people around the world. Many of those who experienced Torture and Trauma or been in war-torn countries are now living with us. About seven out of 10 refugees in Australia have been tortured or gone through some kind of war-related trauma. Some survivors of torture and trauma live with their memories for years, or even for the rest of their lives.

This show is dedicated to raising awareness in our community about T&T and PTSD. On the other hand, it serves as a purpose to contribute in helping to transform emotional wounds of survivors into positivity by remodelling those experiences, in order to recreate reality from the stimuli they experience in their lives. Therefore, if we believe we can use perceptions to transform negative situations, we can do this through art.

“The function of art in society is to build. We rebuild when we’re in danger of collapsing.”
Sigmund Freud

Ghasan Saaid
May 2020
**Found**

This work represents refugee children and youth who may feel a sense of relief as they resettle in another country. However, the difficulties they face do not end upon their arrival. Once resettled, they may face stressors in four major categories: Traumatic Stress, Acculturation Stress, Resettlement Stress, and Isolation. In this artwork, I have depicted the stressors that refugee youth may experience as minorities in a new country. The feelings of loneliness, loss of community, discrimination, as well as harassment from peers, adults, or law enforcement. As an individual of contemporary society, the least we can do is to be aware of their trauma which will spark a journey to harmonious social integration.

**Cognitive Dissonance**

The work is influenced by X-rays of heads, representing the anarchy of information gushing through our senses which individuals experience daily in our contemporary society. News, messages, emails, phone calls, bills, fines, and lots of sensory information keep flooding through our processing apparatus to terminate in our accumulated memory. Cognitive dissonance can be something you don’t even notice because your brain sorts it out quickly. There is an ongoing unconscious negotiation between the sensory information and our mind.
Resistance

This work is influenced by studies of doctors, scientists, and other observers that have demonstrated a connection between childhood trauma and amnesia. There are different theories about traumatic memories which show that forgetting becomes an adaptive response important for trauma survival and avoiding stress. However, this is impossible as traumatic memories cannot simply be forgotten, the real healing process is to resist these memories by belittling them whilst pushing them away and overshadowing these traumatic memories with positive aspects of life.

Revealing and Concealing

This work is influenced by the Darfur genocide and its systematic killing of Darfuri women, children, and men which occurred during the ongoing conflict in Western Sudan. It has become known as the first genocide of the 21st century. The Sudanese Revolution was a major shift in political power in Sudan. It began with street protests throughout Sudan on 19 December 2018 and continued to develop into sustained civil disobedience for about eight months. On 11 April 2019, the Sudanese coup d'état deposed of President Omar al-Bashir after his thirty years in power. Now with the first anniversary of the Sudanese revolution, the horrors and atrocities experienced by the Sudanese people are revealed to the world.

This work is dedicated to all human rights violations around the world.
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FRONT/BACK COVER:
Ghasan Saaid, Resistance (detail)