

## *In the Remains* | Saad Qureshi

October 24<sup>th</sup> – November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

**Aicon Gallery | New York** is proud to present *In the Remains*, the first New York solo exhibition of London-based artist **Saad Qureshi**. The meticulously ornate multi-media exhibition intricately examines the transience of time and the development, distortion and deterioration of personal and collective memory. Here, Qureshi explores the ever-shifting nature of human recollection along its frayed and fragmentary borderlands, while leaving the works haunting, multi-layered narratives ambiguous and open ended for what viewers themselves might bring to the story. Oscillating between the tangible and imagined, the textured and linear, the stark and subtle, the works channel the edge of consciousness where the lines between the present, past and future break down – often within a single painting - and leave us grasping at the fragments and obscurities of experiences drawn from both the artist and ourselves. Layered decorative devices drawing inspiration from traditional Islamic and Christian imagery combine with a host of recurring contemporary motifs of industrial ruins, nomadic camps, rainbow patterns, explosions and clouds of smoke, giving rise to a world where familiar scenes from both Eastern and Western history and the present-day become intertwined, inextricable and indelibly marked by our subjective interpretations.



Saad Qureshi, *Restrain*, 2013, Oil, spray paint and wax pencil on paper, 12.5 x 10 in.

Using his own childhood memories as a starting point, Qureshi's abandoned landscapes and structures appear in both minimalistic and layered forms before expanding into complex conceptual and actualized narratives of personal reflections. Here, the processes of remembrance take on intricate yet lofty forms, travelling beyond a mere depiction of some distant place or story from once upon a time. The subjects slowly render an existence as affected by their own surroundings, while staying local to the initial idea of a recalled personal memory, composing a subtle yet interdependent commentary on both the constantly evolving and constantly disintegrating fabric of perceived experience. Integral to the work, however, is the point at which Qureshi and his subjects must inevitably stand aside, allowing the viewer to wind their own recollective path of discovery through the abstracted realms of both the artist's personal experiences and his interpretation of our shared histories.

Expanding upon his earlier bodies of work, Qureshi continues his stylistic preference for muted background palettes, but progressively implements strategic flourishes of color in his mixed media works, incorporating oil, spray paint and wax pencil. Ambiguous scenes of battle and nomadic landscapes in chaos are populated by faceless unidentifiable inhabitants in conflict, while blood pours forth rainbow-colored and rivers run red. Elsewhere, disembodied angel wings and smoke clouds hover in figureless



Saad Qureshi, *Ashen*, 2013, Oil, spray paint and wax pencil on paper, 12.5 x 17.5 in.

scenes where any explanation for their existence has already been swallowed by the advancing nothingness stage-left. Meanwhile the future of the illusive narrative is seen still coming into existence at right, leaving the overall work to take on the quality of a running film strip, whose characters and events, through the inevitable breakdown of our recollections, are doomed first to obscurity and finally to oblivion.

In Qureshi's large-scale mixed media installation *In The Remains*, the ominous sculptural assemblage assumes a multitude of meanings. The charred black surface alludes to the horrific consequences of increasingly impersonal and mechanized warfare, while the forms of the structures themselves resemble the giant but shadowy weapons with

which it is waged, or perhaps the remains of an incinerated forest caught in the crossfire. As the creator, Qureshi once again invites his viewers to determine the final narrative, subject to their own interpretations and associations derived from the materiality and foreboding presence of the objects. Influenced by various disciplines of psychology, history, religion and philosophy, the work in this exhibition seeks to develop Qureshi's unique exploration of the nature and mechanisms of memory, born from the continuously intertwining experiences of our shared personal and cultural histories.

Born in 1986 in Britain, Qureshi received his MFA in Painting from the Slade School of Fine Art and lives and works in London. His work has been exhibited and collected internationally, including solo exhibitions at Gazelli Art House, London (2012), Aicon Gallery, London (2010), and, among others, the joint exhibition '*Ruins*' at ArtEco Gallery, London (2013) and the group exhibition '*Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River*' at Saatchi Gallery, London (2009). This is his first solo exhibition in New York.

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