

Halim Al Karim - *Influential Ancestors*

In his work, „photography is used for its non-physical qualities: a medium which quite literally creates an image from light, capturing the transient and interwoven nature of time and memory. Iraqi artist Halim Al Karim underwent a harrowing experience during the first Gulf War. Opposing Saddam's regime and its compulsory military service he took to hiding in the desert, living for almost 3 years in a hole in the ground covered by a pile of rocks. He survived only through the assistance of a Bedouin woman who brought him food and water and taught him about gypsy customs and mysticism. Al Karim has since emigrated to America, however, these events have had a profound effect on his life and form the basis for his art practice.“ (Saatchi Gallery)

In 2012 Al Karim built an oversized, wet plate collodion camera himself in order to create huge negative-identical photographs; then, at the last Venice Biennale, he grappled with the medium of glass, using it both for the Murano glass frame and the glass-plate photographs it contained. The result is as frightening as it is breathtaking and oscillates between extremes of beauty and distraught, horrified states. It is terrain in which Al Karim has moved throughout his artistic career to date. The horrifying traumatic intense experience of flight is always noticeable, subtly. Yet art appears to win the day every time, layered or glazed over it all like some edited, poetic film.

Halim Al Karim has exhibited among others at the Center for Art and Media, ZKM Karlsruhe, Paul Klee Museum, Berne, and The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, Colorado. His works are located at The Saatchi Gallery, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Salaam Foundation Abu Dhabi, The Royal Association of Fine Arts, Jordan, the Arab Museum of Contemporary Art, Doha, Qatar, L'Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA), Paris, and Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. Halim Al Karim was nominated for the 2010 Jury Prize of the Sovereign Art Prize and received the Jury Prize of the Cairo Biennial. He has, among other six Iraqi artists, represented the Iraqi Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011).