

PRESS RELEASE

Hajra Waheed
Sea Change
January 18 – March 02, 2013

Experimenter presents *Sea Change*, Hajra Waheed's first solo in India. The exhibition opens Friday, January 18th 2013 and will continue until March 2nd 2013.

Sea Change is a new (and ongoing) body of work that stitches together a story about the missing and the missed. It chronicles the disappearance of all those who do – in the name of salvation, a better life or a new one. In testimony to this, all that remains to be seen, are a series of collaged portraits and Polaroids, files, objects, coded notes and one-page declarations on paper. Through these delicately executed works, Waheed enables a glimpse into the fragments of ourselves we leave behind and the offerings we make to all those along the way. In some respects, *Sea Change* is a quiet ode to those who dare to journey across the borders they once built for themselves.

Much of Waheed's past work (*The Anouchian Passport Portrait Series* and *Swimming Pool Series* among others) has centered on memory and its relationship to photography – as well as photography's use in the mis-identification or further identification of individuals and groups of people undergoing some process of migration. *Sea Change* speaks to similar themes and like much of her work – the visual material here is also directly sourced from existing photographs – in this case a large deck of postcards from the 1930-40's that were gifted to the artist by a friend whose grandfather spent many years photographing his travels. Not dissimilar to most postcards from this period that generally orientalized both people and places in the global south, these particular images became the catalyst by which a process of reclamation and resurrection (of these once photographed persons and places) came into being. In some ways, these unnamed and unidentified individuals become ghosts of the past and future – a skipping record of sorts where viewers are asked to possibly attempt to identify them but are ultimately are forced to walk away without ever fully being able to grasp them or their story. In sifting through the fragments of what has been left behind from *Sea Change*, it is difficult not to begin questioning whether this is indeed a story about the disappearance or perhaps even a mass migration of a particular group of people or about something else. After all, all of the notes left behind suggest a secondary story – a story of love: though what remains unclear is if it is indeed between two people or between person and nation or their notions of 'home.'

The power of a photograph to unleash both ambiguity and certainty is one of the most compelling qualities for the continued use of the medium in Waheed's work. She remains interested in the space between translation and disorientation that takes place when stitching back histories/narratives, the relationship between the text and the photograph, and between drawing and photography. She is also interested in the invisible space created between text, image and object where multiple truths and fantasies coexist, are constructed or superimposed by others and where definitions are continually transforming and mutating as a result of this. The timeliness of the image making processes and specifically the polaroid seems to fascinate Waheed. The exhibition consists of a number of polaroid based works. The last rolls of expired square-shooter film from 1980 not only act as a series of 7 cloudscapes as an ode to their death as a medium but also their death within her practice.

Having lived within the gated corporate headquarters under strict security regulations that prohibited photographic/video documentation of a place Waheed called home for over 22 years, Saudi ARAMCO in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia is the largest transnational oil corporation in the world and home base to 25% of the world's oil export. It is therefore not alarming that all of her works act as an obsessive reconstructed personal archive to replace those that have been otherwise lost. *Sea Change* is therefore an archive where like all archives some things are difficult to understand, accurately record or articulate. Whether using discontinued photographing equipment or Polaroid square shooter, expired film or aged paper as early as 1935, Waheed's drawings, collages and even new time based works always seek to address personal, national and cultural identity formation in relation to political history, popular imagination and the impact of colonial power in a global context.

Hajra Waheed (b. 1980, Calgary, Canada) has regularly exhibited her works in exhibitions across North America, in Europe, Asia and the Middle East including: "Lines of Control", VM Gallery, Karachi; Green Cardamom, London, The Third Line, Dubai (2009); 'Drawing Form' Green Cardamom, London (2010); '(In) The First Circle' Tapies Foundation, Barcelona (2011), 'Changing Stakes', Mercer Union: Center for Contemporary Art, Toronto (2011); Come Invest in Us, You'll strike Gold, Brot Kunstalle, Vienna (2012) and the Herbert Johnson Museum of Art, NY (2012). Her works can be found in a number of permanent collections including the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York, the John Jones Collection and the British Museum, London. She currently lives and works in Montréal, Canada.

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