

Large print guide

Rheim Alkadhi: *Templates for Liberation*

**11 June –
8 September 2024**

Templates for Liberation is the first UK exhibition of the work of Rheim Alkadhi (b.1973). Addressing ongoing consequences of war and colonialism, exemplified by the geopolitical and environmental context of Iraq, the exhibition presents sculptures, archival documentation and emancipatory counter-histories in image and text.

In the main gallery, sculptures made from salvaged tarpaulin lie directly on the floor, unfurl in a pile, line the walls and drape from the ceiling. Heavy-duty tarpaulins are petroleum-based, composed of a thermoplastic made from the residues of crude oil refinement. Iraq, where the artist lived as a child, is one of the world's largest oil and petroleum producers, and the industry has had devastating effects, igniting wars that leave

behind pollutants that contribute to the region's environmental collapse. The tarps in the exhibition would have previously protected cargo on transcontinental transport lorries that cross borders with ease; or served as housing, sheltering migrants who are criminalised at those same crossings. These ecological, political, and migratory conditions inform the work.

Additionally, tarpaulins are physically recalcitrant, they can be reshaped, but only to a degree. The work we encounter in the gallery is a material study of an exchange between the artist, the material and the life the tarp has lived. As such, each sculpture offers a reorientation of the environmental conditions and the geopolitical context from which they arise. Through the main gallery a reading room entitled *The Land and the People* presents Alkadhi's research into a larger colonial project that includes Iraq. Alongside publications and government documents are the seeds of another frame of reference: archival as well as speculative traces of rebellion. Alkadhi offers us these rebel

traces, these sculptures, as a set of templates for re-imagining global space and our agency within our short-term inhabiting of it.

Rheim Alkadhi is an artist who lives in Berlin while working internationally. Encompassing objects, texts, time-based media, and everyday actions and exchanges, Alkadhi's practice originates from research around migration, borders, imperialism and environmental collapse, via material and narrative illustrations.

The exhibition continues until 8 September 2024.

Main Gallery



Works:

1. *Collective Ground, Danced Furiously Upon* **2024**

Industrial transport tarpaulin

2. *To Demilitarize (Disarmed Wing of Hermes UAV M.A.L.E. Drone)* **2024**

Industrial transport tarpaulin, metal supports and fasteners, paint, reflectors

3. *Confluence of Our Currents* **2024**

Industrial transport tarpaulins, metal supports and fasteners

4. *Harvest of Flames* **2019**

Industrial transport tarpaulin, metal fasteners

5. *Untitled* ***[Contents of a Communal Space]*** **2024**

Various small works in industrial transport tarpaulin, metal fasteners, plastic, fabric, misc. materials (throughout gallery)

6. *Disappeared Border Segment: Toward the Inalienable Right of the Dispossessed to Cross from Any Direction* **2020**

Industrial transport tarpaulin, metal fasteners

7. *For the Oppressed to Narrate the Crimes of Their Oppressors (Devastation Panorama)* **2024**

Industrial transport tarpaulin, tar residue

Reading Room

The Land and the People

In this installation, Alkadhi presents three approaches to 'the land and the people'. First is a selection of research into the colonial lens that enclosed the land of Iraq within its modern-day political borders. Second is the American anthropometric 'mastery' over colonised bodies. Third is a response: 'the land and the people' through a distinctly anticolonial lens, evident both in official archive material and via artistic intervention.

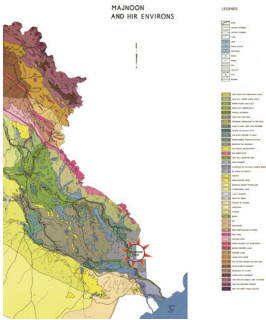
At the study table, snapshots of archival documents unearthed at The National Archives of the UK – memos and agreements, circa 1916–1922 – contain key passages for the reader. The table is conversant with the display case to the left, which contains American publications financed institutionally (and later by the US State Department itself) spanning 1935 to 1962. These accounts concern themselves with the division and subjugation of the land and its

people in the service of British and US interests in the region.

Woven throughout the display is the counter-historical agency of a rebel element. Texts, archival traces and portraits of these rebels reclaim representation, suggesting countless unrecorded insurgencies by the dispossessed: workers, racialised minorities, nonconforming women, communists and others. Their purchase on reality seems just as plausible as the official governmental records in the National Archives. Alkadhi re-seeds history with a previously-lost template, outlining a new model we might use to transcend the imperial violence of today.

Works:

8. Maps:



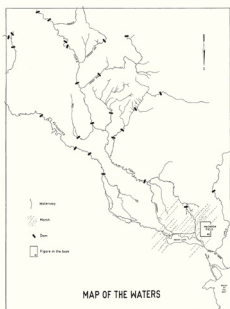
***Manjoon and Hir Environs* 2023**

Altered map and legend drawn from *Exploratory Soil Map of Iraq. Map 1*. Published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Baghdad, 1960



P. Buringh: *Exploratory Soil Map of Iraq. Map 1*

Published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Baghdad, 1960



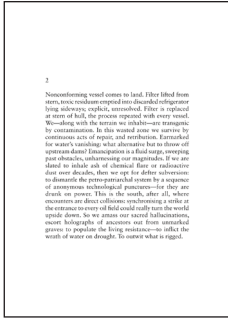
***Map of the Waters* 2023**

Drawn from *Location Map. Soils and Soil Conditions in Iraq. Map 2*. Published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Baghdad, 1960



Map of principle routes (rail, air, oil, vehicle)

1940
Frontispiece in Henry Field,
*The Anthropology of Iraq, Part 1,
Number 1: The Upper Euphrates*,
1940

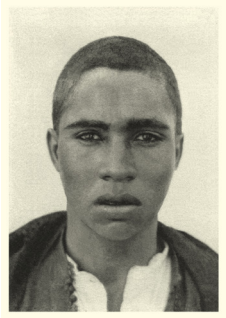


**9. Transsynchronic Rebellion
(excerpt from ‘Majnoon Field
Guide’)**

2019–2022

Text; altered photographs, titled:

- 1 Transgenic female-identifying rebel en route over water
- 2 View of the enclave
- 3 Woven shelter, one of the rotating headquarters in the wasted zone
- 4 Underground channels extend into urban settings
- 5 Transgenic female-identifying rebel steering toward the interchange
- 6 Transsynchronic, to lovingly inhabit this despised earth



**10. Transsynchronic Rebel
Portraits**

2024

Digitally rendered images, wooden frames.

‘Many would argue that the rebel face should not be visible. If we are underground, that is one thing. But as we pass through devastated landscapes, we transform. And these portraits, while immutable, are also wholly and fantastically ephemeral – transcontinental, trans-generational, transgender, across the categorisations that have divided us. This ongoing rebellion arises from between the waters.’

11. Study Table

**c. 1916–1922 & 1945;
compiled 2024**

Snapshots of archival research from The National Archives of the UK; print-outs of related documentation. This selection of memoranda, reports, agreements, maps, draft and final copies of critical governmental documents exemplify the colonial lens on the land and people of Mesopotamia in the service of British interests in the region. These materials are a small sample of available records, many of which have only recently been made public.

Please feel free to handle

12. Bookcase:

**‘The Anthropology of Iraq’
by Henry Field**

This case contains American publications by ethnographer Henry Field, including *Arabs of Central Iraq* (1935) and the four-volume series, *The Anthropology of Iraq* (1940–1952).

For Alkadhi, these volumes expose imperialist strategies to physically ‘master’ populations in the service

of colonial knowledge, military and industrial interests. Each book indexes anthropometric data, including measurements of body parts, racialised categorisations, and ‘scientific’ photographs of individuals identified only by number. The books attest to an enduring link between British and US interests in the region.

***Arabs of Central Iraq, Their
History, Ethnology, and Physical
Characters***

1935

A study of ‘Arabs and Bedouins’ was begun in Kish (Sumer) in 1925 during the British military occupation. *Arabs of Central Iraq* can be seen as a prototype for the four-volume biometric study *Anthropology of Iraq* that followed. A concern for a racialised positioning within the diverse cultural landscape is a recurring colonial obsession. *Frontal and profile portraits depict indigenous inhabitants of what was known as Mesopotamia (or, the land between rivers), later ‘Iraq’ under British mandate. It can be inferred from her particular gaze that*

'No.226' (top left) probably joined the resistance.

Museum-Oxford University Expedition to Kish,
Iraq Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 1,
Number 1: The Upper Euphrates
31 May, 1940***

Henry Field's human data collection – beginning with this first volume, *The Upper Euphrates* (known today as Anbar Province), would inform Roosevelt's secret 'M Project'. Field acknowledges the British Royal Air Force and the Iraq Petrol Company in London for facilitating his research visits.

When it became too risky to openly express opposition to the British, we went underground. The colonial war was bolstered our ethnic divisions, but you will not find wealthy merchant families of Iraq included in the study – rather, such 'research' exploited our wretchedness at the service of capital interests.

**A printed PDF of this volume is available at the centre table.*

Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 1,
Number 1: The Upper Euphrates
May 31, 1940***

Women and girls are separated by age before being measured for anthropometric data collection at the Royal Hospital in Baghdad.

Commentary upon the intimate features of girls' bodies elicits in us a 'revulsion of feeling'. These girls are eleven discrete universes of our future resistance.

Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

***The Anthropology of Iraq, Part 1,
Number 2: The Lower Euphrates-
Tigris Region
1949***

Every volume in the series contains a chapter titled 'The Land and the People'. It is hard not to think of the settler colonial claim – that Palestine was a 'land without people'. After all, history did unfold with Britain's Mandate of Mesopotamia and Palestine.

Geographically, the two rivers convene in southern Mesopotamia, unifying and drawing into the sea, the sea into the ocean. We expand our capacities, become fluid, transcending divisions imposed on us.

*If purity is an instrument of domination,
let us always be contaminated –
intoxicated by love for this miraculous
land, love through our suffering.*

Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 2,
Number 1: The Northern Jazira
1951***

At the outset Field admits the area of 'Northern Jazira' is arbitrarily named. Encompassing the northmost land inside Iraq's new borders between the Tigris and Euphrates, it includes Yazidi populations of Jebel Sinjar, the nomadic Shammar and Sulubba tribes, and ethnic Turkomans. If rivers estimate geographical boundaries, the oil-rich city of Mosul would be included, but it isn't. Colonial interests remain in subtext. *The real intentions of our captors are never made explicit – many secret agreements and omissions. We must maintain a clearer vision: to picture liberation, to lovingly pursue our ethic of belonging to the land.*

Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. XLVI – No.1

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 2,
Number 2: The Northern Jazira
1951***

After the Second World War, anthropometric practices of Physical Anthropology were discredited in academic circles. The conceit of scientific racism seeks to justify white supremacy, genocide, and the anti-migration policies in the Western world.

When we meet, time expands at sunset. We relish the words coming from each others' mouths; we listen, learn, sleep, dream. Time expands again when we awake at sunrise.

Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. XLVI – No.1

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 2,
Number 2: Kurdistan
1952***

Kurdistan as a land and as a people is a distinct entity. As a concept, Kurdistan would be instrumentalized as a colonial buffer zone, the tense 'wedge' that would include the oil fields of Kirkuk and the essential Mosul.

*We cross colonial borders to
commune with strangers whenever*

possible; it is our bodily assertion of individual freedom, to expand our boundaries of love. But when we see the oil pipeline snaking across borders, it is clear that state powers only want to dispossess us.

Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol.XLVI–No.2 and 3

***Anthropology of Iraq, Part 2,
Number 2: Kurdistan***

1952

‘This series of [so many] individuals, including both sexes, does not make possible any definite conclusion.’

We are rebels, existing across vast swaths of earth and sea, across time and form. Impervious to the prison of sleep that upholds the industry of absolute rule, we are awake until the victory we envision.

Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol.XLVI–No.2 and 3

***Contributions to the
Anthropology of Iran: Volume 29,
Number 1 & 2***

1939

In 1939, Henry Field’s two-part ‘report’ Contributions to the Anthropology of Iran was published. Biometric data collection in Iran would seem to have taken place in tandem with his expeditions in Iraq. Alongside the question of migration was a spreading fear of ‘communist’ ideologies.

We are extensions of each other, unflinchingly for and with each other.

Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

***Contributions to the
Anthropology of the Caucasus***

1953

At the height of the McCarthy era, Henry Field eases into zones of interest, continuing with his ‘anthropometric surveys’, ‘expeditions to the Near East’ comprising ‘Iraq, Iran, and the Caucasus’, and later the USSR. University and museum affiliations that facilitated publication of his anthropological ‘findings’ would be implicated during the time that

Field was employed by the State Department.

Our struggle is deep and vast; for we are made from the depths of the earth.

Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol.XLVIII–No.1

***M Project for F.D.R.:
Studies on Migration and
Settlement
1962***

The ‘M’ Project was a secret US government research project to which Henry Field was appointed director. Meant to engineer displacement of populations all over the world, it took most overt form in FDR’s internment of people with Japanese ancestry living in the United States between 1942 and 1946.

‘The M-Project had its spiritual birth in Roosevelt’s effervescent mind long before it was brought into existence with financing from the President’s unvouchered emergency funds.’ p.374

Copyright 1962 by Henry Field, Edwards, Bros.:
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Event Programme

19 JUNE, 6.00PM:

***Our River... Our Sky* + Q&A**

Director Maysoon Pachachi and Rheim Alkadhi in conversation following the screening.

29 JUNE, 4.30PM:

The Hour of Liberation Has Arrived

Screening of the 1974 film by Heiny Srour.

3 JULY, 6.30PM:

Navigating Ruins, Looking for Liberation: Panel discussion with Kali Rubaii (online), Kanwal Hameed and Laleh Khalili + Q&A

Towards an alternative future, speakers will respond to the exhibition's central questions on the consequences of imperialist exceptionalism and the geopolitics of extraction (whether oil, land, or people).

20 JULY, 4.30PM: *Zooland* + *Am I the Ageless Object at the Museum?* + *The Kingdom of Women: Ein el Hilweh*

Triple-bill screenings of Pary El-Qalqili's 2016 film, Noor Abuarafeh's 2018 film and Dahna Abourahme's 2010 film.

3 AUGUST, 4.30PM:

Films by Ateyyat El Abnoudy

Screening of four of her short films: *The Sandwich* (1975), *Horse of Mud* (1971), *Sad Song of Touha* (1972) and *Souk Elcanto (Jumble Sale)* (1974).

24 AUGUST, 4.30PM:

The Lovers' Wind

Screening of the 1978 film by Albert Lamorisse.

7 SEPTEMBER, 4.30PM:

The Marshes* + *Ma' Ioul Celebrates Its Destruction

Double-bill screening of Kassem Hawal's 1976 film and Michel Khleifi's 1984 film.

Please visit www.ica.art to book tickets and find out more information on events including arranging educational and youth tours.

Access

Please do not touch artworks. You can use the icons indicated in the sensory map for further references.

You need to purchase a ticket to the exhibition at the Box Office or online. At the front desk you will receive a sticker which validates your entry into the gallery.

Feel free to take photos of all artworks in this exhibition and share your experience by tagging *@icalondon*

No food or drink in this space.

The Lower Gallery is lit by overhead strip lights. The light levels in these spaces can also be dependent on the weather and time of day.

There is a smaller gallery room on the left-hand side of the Lower Gallery, there is also a small ramp into this space.

You may exit the exhibition through the reading room. For wheelchair and accessible route out of the gallery please use the gallery entrance back via the ramp.

See our sensory map of the exhibition for more information.

