



XVA Gallery presents solo exhibition by Walid Siti  
“Erbil – Dubai: Chasing Utopia”

**2 November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

**13<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Dubai, UAE** – XVA Gallery DIFC marks the month of November with a remarkable exhibition by Kurdish Iraqi artist Walid Siti. This exhibition coincides with the return of the Iraq Pavilion to the 54th Venice Biennale between June and November 2011, marking an incredible benchmark in placing Iraqi artists back on the global contemporary art stage, with Walid Siti being one of the six leading artists exhibiting.

In his upcoming exhibition at the XVA Gallery, Walid Siti, a Kurdish Iraqi, British based artist, who came of age in the 1970s during the period of the creation of political socialism, draws upon the parallels between the transformation of the ancient city of Erbil and that of the ever changing Dubai city landscape. His exhibition entitled ‘Erbil – Dubai: Chasing Utopia’ encapsulates the struggle of city trying to keep hold of its identity in an ever changing and aspirational world and includes engaging installations, paintings, sculptures and drawings from Walid’s new body of work.

Through the eyes of an artist, Walid notes that many places in Erbil are named after Dubai landmarks: Rotana, Empire World, Dream city, Marina, Dubai’s Bazaar. Walid considers, that after decades of war and oppression, the city of Erbil is witnessing a major change, with cranes filling the city’s skyline, and the construction of the new in full swing... “Erbil is transforming beyond recognition.”

In this body of work comprising of drawings, paintings, sculpture and installation, Walid attempts to convey the sense of confusion and perhaps utopia involved, and the concern he has for its environmental and social impact in Erbil. Through the use of uniformity of physical forms, using the city grid as formal element and incorporating various symbols drawn from the culture, Walid’s work attempts to capture the discrete but interconnected elements that mark the global connections in this trend, including the power and economic strength shaping the city.

Visually, Walid sees the vanishing role of Erbil’s citadel as focal point – something that has metaphorically bonded the fabric of society and shaped the city’s character for centuries – marking the end of an era. The lack of debate and the serious consideration given to the unique character, history, environment, social and cultural aspects of society, takes the whole experiment, in Walid Siti’s view to the edge of utopia.



Arab artists are continuing to captivate audiences around the world with their desire to tell stories through artistic interpretation and creative flair. To a curious audience gazing towards the recent struggles and adversity of the Middle East, Walid Siti's work represents a time when the Middle East is going through a significant transformation and period of historical change.

Set to open on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, Erbil – Dubai: Chasing Utopia will be celebrated with an evening reception from 6:00pm – 9:00pm, with an appearance from the artist.

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**Notes to Editor:**

Walid Siti was born 1954 in Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan, after graduating from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1976, from 1977-1982 he studied at Academy of Fine Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia from where he obtained BA & MA in printmaking. He moved to London in 1984 and gradually shifted from printmaking into painting, drawing and installation.

His work is to be found in several prestigious public collections such as The British Museum, The Imperial War Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The National Gallery of Amman, Jordan; The World Bank, Washington DC, and The Iraq Memory Foundation, Art for American embassy program, USA.

**About XVA**

Established in 2003, XVA is one of the leading galleries in the Middle East specialising in contemporary art from the Arab world and Iran. Its rigorous exhibition programme includes works by emerging, mid-career and established artists who are responding to their local environments in thoughtful and provocative ways. XVA offers art consultancy services, providing expert consultancy and full project management for companies and individual requirements in art.

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