

Ali Eyal: *In the Head's Sunrise*

December 8, 2022 – January 28, 2023



Ali Eyal, *Soda pop, and*, 2022. Colored pencil, pastels and ink on paper. 8.3 x 11.7 inches.

Finally, someone reached out and tore the head off, soda pop came out from the scalp. I don't know, and I don't know who they are... – A.E.

Ali Eyal's paintings are characterized by their intense subjectivity that bring forth fragmented narratives and surreal visual scenes and compositions. Retrieved in tangled strands of hair or found on the path illuminated by the headlights of a pick-up truck, figures appear, searching for something or someone that is missing; they cover their faces, they run, their apparent movement obscures their features. Eyal's works piece together memories, dreams, and stories that reach into one another and across media, rendering incomprehensible violences and unfathomable events witnessed in the artist's hometown, a place he calls *small farm*.

Set against the impossible scale of calamity in war, Eyal gives curious attention to the intimate, and often absurd, accounts to be found in this concentrated space. He arranges these intersecting narratives, and swiftly, he captures a moment or a gesture, like an artist in a courtroom, sketching the chronicles as they unfold. He draws everything he can see until the flashlight's glow no longer illuminates the view and the image breaks off into darkness.

An artist and poet, Eyal's text is an extension of his drawings and a thread to his paintings that return as narrative links in his performances and videos. In the contemporary novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Iraqi writer Ahmed Saadawi stitches together a portrait of a land in horrific turmoil through the creation of a monster made from corpses found among the mayhem in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq. This modern Prometheus resurrects a creature to stir those in power to care about the dead, unwittingly giving the possibility that the disappeared might return. Eyal's artworks, too, build up a landscape of disappeared memory, torn, stitched, sewn, and wrapped back into each other. In the video installation *The Blue Ink Pocket*, and (2022), the narrator describes finding disparate paintings of body parts, "We stumbled upon the left ear inside the bag of rice. We retrieved the painting of the head from inside the abandoned storage. The right ear from under the stairs. The shoulders and the hands we found inside the jacket. And we found the feet stuffed inside the cotton." He recounts the pieces, removing them from their hiding place one at a time.

Ali Eyal is currently featured in *Is It Morning for You Yet?*, the 58th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh on view from September 24, 2022 to April 2, 2023. Upcoming exhibitions include, Sharjah Biennial 15: *Thinking Historically in the Present*, February 7, 2023. Eyal's solo exhibitions include *In the Head's Sunrise*, Brief Histories, New York; *In the Head's Dusk*, SAW Gallery, Ottawa. He recently took part in Documenta 15, Kassel; and group exhibitions at MoMA PS1, New York; Beirut Art Center, Lebanon; Warehouse, Abu Dhabi. Eyal's video works have been included in the Rencontres Internationales, Paris; VITRINE x Kino Screenings, London; Sharjah Film Platform, Sharjah Art Foundation; and Cairo Video Festival, Medrar, Cairo. Eyal studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad (2015), was resident at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam (2020) and Home Workspace Independent Study Program, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2016-17). He lives and works in Los Angeles.

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Gallery hours are Thursday-Saturday 12pm–6pm.

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