

Mohammed Sami  
The Point 0  
27 Jan/28 May 2023



Mohammed Sami, *Weeping Lines*, 2022. Mixed media on linen, 290 x 345 cm. Courtesy the artist and Modern Art, London

Camden Art Centre is pleased to present a new exhibition, *The Point 0*, by Mohammed Sami (b.1984, Baghdad, Iraq). This is Sami's first institutional solo exhibition in the UK and will continue his long-standing exploration of memory in relation to time and conflict, bringing together more than 10 major new paintings, alongside important works made over the last four years.

Sami's works interrupt straightforward narrative readings. Recalling moments from his own past – first as a young artist co-opted by the Ba'ath regime to create propaganda images, and later as a refugee granted asylum in Sweden – his paintings draw on the unreliability, subjectivity and peculiar precision of memories. Hallucinatory in both tone and conception, he creates a space in which feelings, moments and places emerge and resurface as highly charged but often inscrutable and unsettling images.

Sami's poignant and evocative paintings render abandoned interiors, claustrophobic cityscapes and uncanny depictions of apparently everyday objects including chairs, tables, couches and clothing. There is a strange absence of people, yet the settings are haunted by the trace of human presence; empty chairs in a parliamentary hall become a vast graveyard, medals pinned on a military shirt evoke both bullet holes and flowers in a field, whilst the shadow of a spider plant metamorphoses into a threatening and malevolent presence. While conflict and trauma are never directly depicted, a deep sense of unease is conveyed, lingering just beneath the surface. Garments, mattresses, carpets and other objects – each shaped and formed by the pressure and proximity of bodies – act as substitutes for the human figure, a kind of prosthesis or phantom, lingering long after the subject has departed.

Sami never takes photographs or makes sketches, instead mining his own experiences from his formative years in Iraq. Negotiating the past through painting, Sami's works probe at the root of what it means to remember, to excavate the past and return again and again to the point of origin - *The Point 0*. Working directly onto canvas with brush, pallet

knife and spray paint, Sami gives as much attention to the textures, surfaces and details in the works, as he does to the composition as a whole. It's a means for him to get closer to the way memory works, triggered, as it so often is, by unexpected and apparently unremarkable encounters with the minutiae of every-day life. Sami seeks to capture what the camera can't, to paint what's left and what returns.

The exhibition will be accompanied by the first major monograph on Sami's work, designed by Fraser Muggeridge Studio and including newly commissioned texts by Darian Leader and Amy Sherlock.

The exhibition is organised by Camden Art Centre in collaboration with De La Warr Pavilion where it will open in summer 2023.

#### Notes to editors

For further information, interviews and images please contact:  
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#### Biography

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1984, Sami lives and works in London, UK. Having completed studies in drawing and painting at the Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad, he worked at the Ministry of Culture in Baghdad, before being granted asylum in Sweden in 2007. Sami graduated from Belfast School of Art in 2015, and earned an MFA at Goldsmith's College, London, in 2018. His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including *The London Open 2022* at Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Mixing It Up: Painting Today* at Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2021); *Stilla liv (Still life)*, Gallery Magnus Karlsson, Gotland, Sweden (2021); *The Sea is the Limit*, York Art Gallery, UK and Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Doha, Qatar (2018-19); as well as The Culture Night of Norrköping City, Norrköping Art Museum, Sweden (2011). His paintings are held by the Arts Council Collection, London; The Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; The Blenheim Art Foundation, Woodstock; The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Government Art Collection, London; the HE Museum, Foshan; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Imperial War Museum, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Tate, London; and the Permanent Collection of York Art Gallery, York.

#### Camden Art Centre

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