

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Wafaa Bilal: Agent Intellect**

January 21 - April 4, 2010

featuring the work of Wafaa Bilal, curated by Odin Cathcart



**What:** Wafaa Bilal, “Agent Intellect”:

A major solo show by Iraqi artist Wafaa Bilal, featuring acclaimed works *Domestic Tension (Redux)* and *Virtual Jihadi*, along with the *Ashes Series* never before displayed in the U.S. and two new installation pieces.

**When:**

Thurs. Jan. 21, 6-8pm: Art Opening

Fri. Jan. 22, 6pm: Screening of *The Night of Bush Capturing: A Virtual Jihadi* followed by discussion on free speech with artist Wafaa Bilal

Exhibit runs through April 4

**Where:** Helen Day Art Center, 5 School Street, Stowe, Vermont

**Contact:** WHO

### **Description of the Exhibition:**

*“Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extent they dictate the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages, or we remain mute.” —J. G. Ballard*

The Helen Day Art Center will feature the work of Wafaa Bilal opening January 21, 2010. The exhibition features four major works representing a comprehensive overview of the past three years of the artist’s career. *Domestic Tension Redux*, a recreation of Bilal’s award winning 2007 performance piece will occupy the East Gallery. The main gallery will contain his new and ongoing series *Ashes*, a series of five large format photographs based on models Bilal constructs along with one of the models, *Samarra*. In addition Bilal’s previously censored video-game art work *The Night of Bush Capturing: A Virtual Jihadi* will be available for the first time in the U.S. The West Gallery will hold a site-specific installation titled *Mighaisil (Morgue)*, a contemplative space created to consider death, violence and place. This is the first time these works have ever been displayed together providing a comprehensive understanding of the artist’s career since 2007.

In 2004 Wafaa Bilal’s brother Haji was killed by a Predator drone attack in Al Kufa, Iraq. The drone was guided by a pilot stationed over 7,000 miles away in the western U.S. At the time Wafaa was living and working in Chicago, in what he refers to as the “comfort zone.” The loss of his brother forced Bilal to consider his own personal relationship to his new home, America and his birth country Iraq as well as the relationships we now have between technology and war. Bilal himself fled Iraq in 1992 and spent two years in a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia before emigrating to the U.S. Haji’s death was the genesis of the work *Domestic Tension (2007)* a thirty day performance art piece where Bilal occupied a gallery for 30 days, 24/7 at the mercy of an automated paintball canon remotely controlled by anonymous internet users. *Domestic Tension* used performance art to focus our attention on the disparity between our “comfort zone” here in America and the “conflict zone” of Iraq by allowing individuals access to violence through a virtual

experience. What are the differences between aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic pain? How does technology desensitize us to violence? How can we reconnect with the universally shared experience of the human condition? What strategies are available to empathize with other cultures with whom we are at war.

Photo credits: (All images courtesy of the artist) L to R: Artist rendering of *Mighaisil (Morgue)* 2009, dimensions variable; documentary photo of *Domestic Tension* art performance, Chicago, IL, 2007; *Ashes: Cell*, 40 x 60" archival inkjet print mounted on diebond, 2009.

**More Information:**

On Thursday, January 21 a lecture/tour for members by Wafaa Bilal at 5:00 PM (non-members are welcome with a \$10 donation) will precede the exhibition opening from 6 - 8 PM. On Friday, January 22 the Helen Day will feature a viewing of the documentary of *The Night of Bush Capturing: A Virtual Jihadi's* censorship in Troy, NY created by the Sanctuary for Independent Media followed by a discussion on free speech (doors open at 6 PM).

The exhibition will be on view at the Helen Day Art Center at 5 School Street in Stowe, Vermont above the Stowe Public Library. The gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday, Noon - 5 PM. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students, seniors and children under 18.