

Questions of human existence

Iraqi artist Sadik Kwaish Alfraji presents a thought-provoking show at Ayyam Gallery in DIFC this month. *Jenny Hewett* hears from the artist about his solo exhibition 'Nothing, Nobody', and what his work represents

You can't miss Sadik Kwaish Alfraji's works: characterised by a shadowy figure that leaps off the canvas like a troubled ghost, the Iraqi artist's dark portraits explore a frailty in the human condition and explore the question of human existence.

Born in Baghdad, but now based in the Netherlands, Alfraji's works appear to steer clear of political meaning and comment on the human condition as a whole. Currently on show at Ayyam Gallery in DIFC, his exhibition, 'Nothing, Nobody', could be interpreted as dark, eerie and sombre, but Alfraji's work also embodies a softness and rare humility. We caught up with him to take a closer look at his pieces.

What are the main themes in your work?

The issue of our existence and what follows it, so my work includes the anxiety, emotions and thoughts that are involved with that.

How has growing up in Iraq and moving to Europe shaped you as an artist?

Any kind of transition adds to a person and, above all, to an artist's richness of experience, quality and possibilities in terms of where they can take their work. This is what I've gained.

What does the dark figure in 'Nothing, Nobody' represent?

Any one of us. It is all of us.

How have the struggles of your country influenced your work?

It has made my work more intense and deep.

What mediums and materials have you used in this exhibition?

I've mainly used Indian ink, charcoal, rice paper and oil on canvas, and I also have one animation video.

Often the figures in your paintings are seen in shadows, but the hands are depicted in a more lifelike manner (far right). What are you trying to convey?

My aim is to give more focus to the theme and the concept of the exhibition as 'Nothing, Nobody'. Our two main senses are sight and touch, and they convey our knowledge and realisation of ourselves and the world around us. I use the following statement to describe it: 'Eyes that stare into nothingness, and a hand that dreads the void. Fastened to our places, we are intoxicated by the



illusion of motion and ruminating on dreams. Yes dear, Nothing, Nobody.'

What influences you?

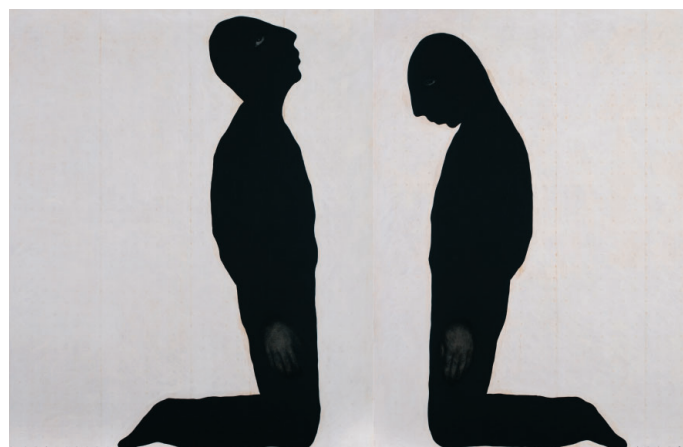
German expressionism and the philosophy of existentialism.

Everything we go through, come across and experience has its share in influencing our actions and

thoughts. I am inspired by everything and anything.

In future, will you continue to use the shadowy figures?

I usually work in concepts, so if the concept I'm working on needs this image, I'll use it. Still, the shadowy figure is closest to my heart and art.



THE LOWDOWN
i Artist: Sadik Kwaish Alfraji (Iraqi).
Exhibition: 'Nothing, Nobody' until December 15 at Ayyam Gallery, Gate Village Building 3, DIFC (04 439 2395).
Price range of works: Dhs73,475 to Dhs220,426.