

# KÖNIG GALERIE

## MONIRA AL QADIRI | CRUDE EYE

KÖNIG GALERIE | 29 APRIL – 2 JUNE 2023

On the occasion of Gallery Weekend Berlin 2023, KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present the first solo exhibition at St. Agnes of Monira Al Qadiri, one of the rising voices in art from the Middle East and one of the newest faces to the program. CRUDE EYE brings together a selection of recent works that investigate one of the artist's foremost concerns: the social and political history around petroleum production and energy dependence. The Berlin-based Al Qadiri originally hails from Kuwait, an epicenter of oil mining and refinement, whose discovery is relatively recent to the larger history of the Gulf Region.

Al Qadiri is an artist whose work routinely brings cultural history to bear on the story of oil. Viewers are greeted to CRUDE EYE with the installation SEISMIC SONGS, which features a dinosaur singing karaoke, which despite its ludic tone, actually revisits the discoveries of an oil engineer's seismographic work that was used for locating oil deposits, which he later developed into the now infamous technology for pitch shifting known as the Auto-Tune effect. Al Qadiri's searching repurposing of this technology reimagines its uses not for extraction, but for a means of listening to the ancient creatures whose layered remains are ultimately the source of oil.

On the exterior wall of the Chapel exhibition space is an installation of Al Qadiri's sculptures, SPECTRUM, which appropriate the actual form of the ubiquitous oil drill heads used to extract oil. These luminescent objects look like designs from a distant future despite their everyday service, a beauty that belies their destructive potential for burrowing beneath the earth's mantle. The destruction wrought by these drills was not just geological, as they ushered in a new petro-economy that displaced the previous culture of the pearl trade in the Gulf Region. Using the iridescent sheen of both oil and pearls, the work attempts to bridge the two epochs together, as well as imagine a future after oil through color and form.

Finally, the moving image work which bears the title of the exhibition, CRUDE EYE, is an autobiographic journey that was made through the artist's attempts to remember the unique vistas of her childhood Kuwait, their unique topography. At the heart of the vision of this city is an actual oil refinery that glows in the night, which as a child, the artist imagined as a magical kingdom, a kind of forbidden planet, a movie set. In the present, this imagined site of mystery is heavily guarded, and any photography is forbidden, which created the impetus for Al Qadiri to have to recreate the landscape as a miniature model in her studio, which she filmed for this film, distorting notions of scale and reality.

Al Qadiri's position is one of the most unique in her generation, not merely for its timely investigation of the oil industry and the erasure of local histories and cultures, but as well for the poignant lines of attachment her works explore. These are strained on the one hand by the brute reality of petroleum, and on the other, the desire to give voice to other possible futures for these narratives, in the present.

Monira Al Qadiri (b. 1983) is a Kuwaiti visual artist born in Senegal and educated in Japan. Spanning sculpture, installation, film, and performance, Al Qadiri's multifaceted practice is based on research into the cultural histories of the Gulf region. Her interpretation of the Gulf's so-called "petro-culture" is manifested through speculative scenarios that take inspiration from science fiction, autobiography, traditional practices and pop culture, resulting in uncanny and covertly subversive works that destabilize mythologies of statecraft and modernization as well as traditional notions of gender. Tracing the delicate ecologies threatened by the petroleum industry's relentless resource extraction, Al Qadiri's works envision a world in which oil is a relic of humanity's past. She is currently based in Berlin.

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### EXHIBITIONS

ROBERT JANITZ  
Sphinx  
KÖNIG GALERIE  
29.04. – 02.06.2023

DAVID ZINK YI  
Playing Until Failure  
KÖNIG SEOUL  
20.05. – 18.06.2023

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Tue – Sat 10 AM – 6 PM