

Mohammed Kazem

Receiving and Collecting

9 January – 23 February

Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde is pleased to present new work by Mohammed Kazem in a solo exhibition entitled *Receiving and Collecting*.

Throughout his practice, Mohammed Kazem has tried to capture the un-capturable. From his own body and the objects of his quotidian to nature itself, Kazem senses what is un-measurable—sometimes even un-seeable—and transfigures it into a visual work. He observes and measures, yet he does not record. He collects and analyses, yet he does not portray. Rather, Kazem responds to the abstractness of nature. He hears, then renders sounds visually. He sees, then uses action, performance to make a vision manifest. His scratchings, paintings, drawings and sculpture are at the fulcrum of many senses—sound, sight, touch, movement. And each work offers new proof that Kazem has the ability to see what lies beyond sight.

This quest for the un-capturable knows no end: Kazem continually strives to “receive” new moments from the hand of nature—a swathe of sunlight across his balcony, a shadow tapering along the floor. While his immediate environment is a hotbed of reflection and sensing, he also ventures out into the wider world to “collect” experiences, whether a wayward slogan on a billboard, or the graphic interplay of light, objects and shadow. Harking back to his well-known Autobiography series, Kazem appears in works in *Receiving and Collecting*. Some literally depict him at work—his hands “collecting” light—while others bear the mark of the performance that was both the works’ genesis and process.

In *Receiving Light* (2016), Kazem lies in wait for the sun to sweep across his balcony or bleed into a room. He captures this luminous visitor into his personal space via a photograph, then applies his hallmark scratching technique to render the light intensity tangible, as if he has somehow made nature analogue. Conversely, in *Collecting Light* (2016), the artist photographically hunts down the elusive play of sunlight on objects in the world—plants, poles, rocks, doors—and scratches the surface following the light’s direction. The raised and scattered dots of the textured image oddly echo the movement of this fleeting sun on its course. Materiality has been given to light, which had none; two dimensions have bristled into three.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, because of his initial training as a musician, sound—or, more precisely, “visual sound”—is a recurring feature of Kazem’s work. In *Sculpting Sound* (2012), the artist attempts to render a cacophonous bar as a visual experience. Multi-lingual phrases saturate the space, vibrating across walls and throbbing through the doorway in a sequin-dotted visual blare.

With a nod to his friend and mentor Hassan Sharif’s “actions,” *Experiment* (2016) is a series of multi-layered ink and acrylic works on paper in which the performance of the artist—rolling, dunking, creasing, layering, dripping—is latent in the work itself. Rounding out the show is *Windows 2011–2012* (2011–12) a series of 108 drawings capturing the spontaneous and

the unrepeatable of his environment. Slightly ironic and politically tinged, these too are in the critical lineage of the late Hassan Sharif.

What does sound look like? What does light feel like? How is a painting bodily? Can the immaterial be made material? These are the questions that punctuate Kazem’s practice. Perhaps they are questions without answers. But perhaps, by fathoming them, the artist opens new windows onto an unimagined imagination.

Mohammed Kazem Biography

Mohammed Kazem (born 1969, Dubai) lives and works in Dubai. He has developed an artistic practice that encompasses video, photography and performance to find new ways of apprehending his environment and experiences. The foundations of his work are informed by his training as a musician, and Kazem is deeply engaged with developing processes that can render transient phenomena, such as sound and light, in tangible terms. Often positioning himself within his work, Kazem responds to geographical location, materiality and the elements as a means to assert his subjectivity, particularly in relation to the rapid pace of modernisation in the Emirates since the country’s founding.

Kazem was a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society early in his career and is acknowledged as one of the ‘Five’, an informal group of Emirati artists – including Hassan Sharif and Abdullah Al Saadi – at the vanguard of conceptual and interdisciplinary art practice. In 2012, Kazem completed his Masters in Fine Art at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. He has been participating in the Annual Exhibitions of the Emirates Fine Arts Society in Sharjah since 1986, as well as numerous editions of Sharjah Biennial, receiving first prize for installations in 1999 and 2003, and in 2007, co-curated the Sharjah Biennial. In recent years, Kazem has participated in several group shows at the Mori Art Museum (2012), Boghossian Foundation (2013), Gwangju Museum of Art (2014), and the 2014 edition of the Fotofest Biennial in Houston. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale three times: in 2009 as part of a group exhibition curated by Catherine David, in 2013, he represented the UAE with an immersive video installation entitled *Walking on Water*, which was curated by Reem Fadda, and in 2015, he showcased works from the *Tongue* series at 1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the UAE, curated by Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi. In November 2014, he presented two solo shows *Sound of Objects* at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde in Dubai, and *Memorising By Means Of Observing* at Taymour Grahne Gallery in New York. The following year in March, he co-curated *A Public Privacy*, a group show featuring works by emerging UAE-based artists at DUCTAC’s *Gallery of Light*. His works are held in the collections of the British Museum, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and New York, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, and Barjeel Art Foundation, among others.