

PRESS RELEASE

JAMES P GRAHAM
DESACRATION

31 JANUARY - 28 FEBRUARY 2020
PRIVATE VIEW: 30 JANUARY FROM 6PM - 8PM

BIBLIOTECA VALLICELLIANA, SALONE BORROMINI
PIAZZA DELLA CHIESA NUOVA 18, 00186 ROMA

'We took action to stop a war, we did not take action to start a war!' - Donald Trump



JAMES P GRAHAM, *ALEPPO RED*, 2017 INK AND WATERCOLOR ON LAYERED PAPER, 26 X 18 CM

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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THE EXHIBITION

James P Graham's new project *Desacration* will be exhibited for the first time at the Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Rome from 30 January until 28 February. The exhibition is made up of a series of paper sculptures, mapping landscapes in the Middle East which have suffered serious environmental damage from recent conflict. Sites have mainly been chosen on account of their archaeological and cultural significance but sometimes because of the sheer scale of devastation, rendering landscapes useless and sterile.

The exhibition aims to engage the viewer with the physical reality of environmental destruction, a threat to the ancient history and knowledge of our civilisation. Paradoxically, the Biblioteca Vallicelliana, established in 1565 by St. Filippo Neri, houses an incredible collection of manuscripts such as the Bible of Alcuin from the 9th century, and a number of these will be exhibited alongside the artworks to highlight this paradox. It is therefore highly appropriate that 'Desacration' should be first exhibited in this historical treasure chest of knowledge.

Using satellite images as his starting point, Graham uses several different techniques in this work. Contoured paper layers cut precisely with a scalpel not unlike *kirigami*, the Japanese art of paper cutting, combined with a watercolour palette which often suggests the colours of heavy body bruising. He also includes a tapestry of ultra fine black and white lines which resemble oil rivers or dried riverbeds. Finally, he uses moulded plastic which is sculpted into abstract shapes suggesting human detritus. In one work *Archaeological Remains of the Anthropocene*, Graham ponders that our archeological footprint could be characterised by the discovery and excavation of our non-biodegradable plastic.

His sites are carefully chosen, notably Aleppo, Mosul, Baghdad, Sanaa, all names synonymous with terrible conflict and obliteration. The largest and arguably most accomplished work in the series *Under the Skin* depicts the camp at Al-Hawl, in northern Syria, which holds over 70,000 prisoners mainly women and children from the former ISIS capital Raqqa. Graham's highly detailed work recounts one of the world's most forbidding landscapes, inhabited by some of it's most wretched humans. Meandering black or white lines in the landscape are reminiscent of veins and arteries in the human body, getting under the skin, and reinvoking the sheer horror of this place.

The title of the exhibition *Desacration* is a play on the word 'desecration' defined as 'the destructive treatment of that which is held to be sacred or holy by a group or individual'. Graham does not take a political stance in this work, but is acutely mindful of the active and influential role that artists can and should fulfill to help resolve the apocalyptic crises the world currently faces.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

James P Graham (born 1961) has been an artist since 2001. He is auto-didact, previously practicing as commercial photographer and filmmaker. His first notable work *Iddu* is a 360 degree film made on the active volcano Stromboli. This has been shown all over the world and most recently in the show *Pompei e Santorini, Eternità in un giorno* at the Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome. *Desacration* will be his first solo show since the retrospective *Calling for the Infinite Sphere* in 2015.

Mainly using landscape and nature, his work has explored the now disused term 'scientia sacra', where chosen locations and objects carry a metaphysical and ontological significance. Graham likes to use different energy sources, physical or metaphysical, real or imagined which challenge the viewer to step beyond sensual perception.

He lives and works between London and Italy.

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EVENTS

In conjunction with the exhibition there will be a special event. On Thursday 6th February at 7.00pm there will be an opportunity to listen to a concert of wonderful contemporary Iranian music with reknown artist Pejman Tadayon, his band and choir. Entry free of charge.

OPENING HOURS

Monday, Tuesday and Friday 8.15-15.00

Wednesday 15.00-18.00 Thursday 11.00-14.00 & 15.00-18.00

Closed Saturday and Sunday



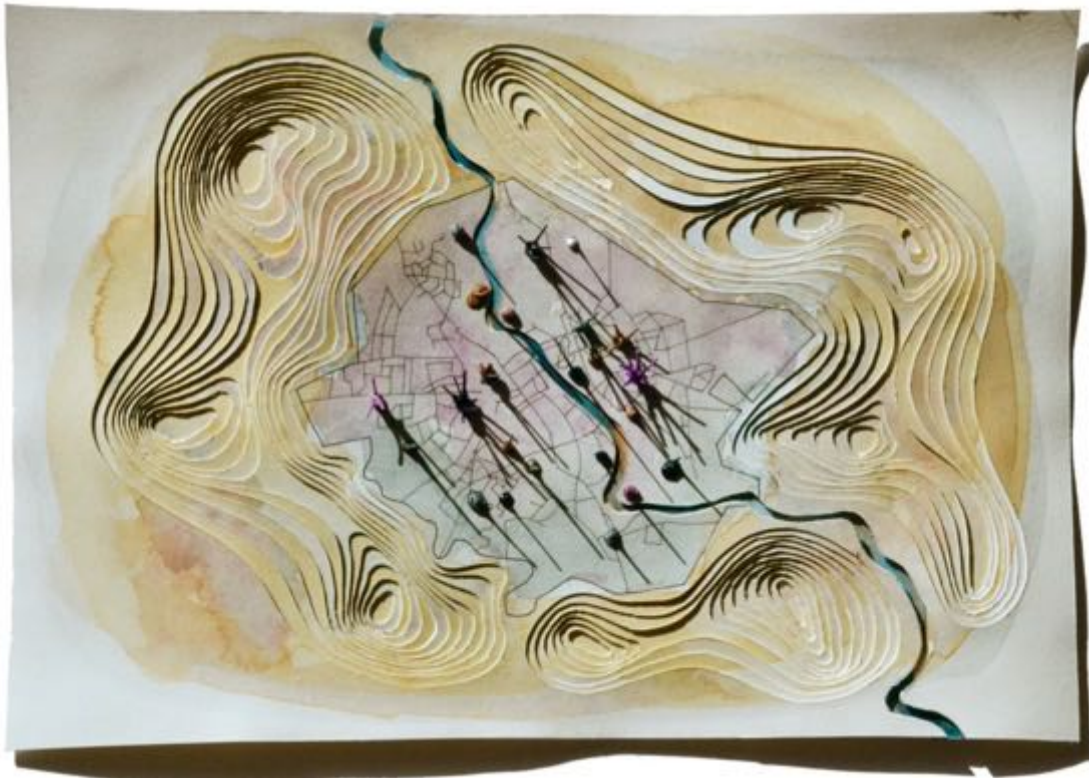
JAMES P GRAHAM, *UNDER THE SKIN* (DETAIL), 2019
INK, WATERCOLOR, PLASTIC ON LAYERED PAPER, 106 X 66 CM

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JAMES P GRAHAM, *MOSUL*, 2017
INK, WATERCOLOR, PLASTIC ON LAYERED PAPER, 26 X 18 CM



JAMES P GRAHAM, *URBAN OILFIELD*, 2017
INK AND WATERCOLOR ON LAYERED PAPER, 26 X 18 CM

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