

Gasworks presents *The Craft*, the first UK solo exhibition by Monira Al Qadiri.

The exhibition comprises sculptures, videos and sound works that envisage international diplomacy as an alien conspiracy. Shown in two distinct environments – a mysterious, pitch black anteroom and an American diner – these semi-autobiographical works of science fiction unearth the unlikely stories lurking in the shadows of the artist's childhood in Kuwait. Revisiting the fantasies that she and her sister elaborated during these early years, they depict the culture and rituals of diplomacy by which they were then surrounded as literally otherworldly to the current rise of nationalism and political populism.

Pouring petrol on the flames, the central work in the exhibition, the VHS video *The Craft*, asks: “Were my parents conspiring with aliens behind my back?” Reality crumbles, paranoia and speculation take hold. Pop culture, futuristic architecture, junk food, dream readings, alien abductions, geopolitics, diplomacy, war and peace: all of these once solid staples of modern life become tainted by a general sense of distrust, which overshadows everything. Like a ticking time bomb placed at the centre of the nuclear family unit, suspicion reaches a crescendo when the protagonist discovers that the ‘American Century’ has finally ended.

Co-commissioned by Gasworks and the Sursock Museum, Beirut with support from *Shubbak: A Window on Contemporary Arab Culture*, 1–16 July 2017; Cockayne—Grants for the Arts and the London Community Foundation; and Exhibition Programme Supporter 2017-18, Catherine Petitgas.

Monira Al Qadiri is a Kuwaiti visual artist born in Senegal and educated in Japan. In 2010, she received a Ph.D. in inter-media art from Tokyo University of the Arts, where her research was focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle East stemming from poetry, music, art and religious practices. Her work explores unconventional gender identities, petrocultures and their possible futures, as well as the legacies of corruption. She is also part of the artist collective GCC.

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