

**PRESS RELEASE****Failing States: Recent work by Tazeen Qayyum and Adeela Suleman**

3<sup>rd</sup> June – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Opening 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009 6:30 – 9:30pm

'Failing States: recent work by Tazeen Qayyum and Adeela Suleman' presents work by two emerging female Pakistani artists. Each produces nuanced, layered works that draw on the seemingly ephemeral (whether domestic utensils or insect-life) but can be read as being rooted in the complex social and political reality of contemporary Pakistan.

Suleman uses stainless-steel domestic implements and transforms them into objects that are in turn witty and melancholic. Funnels are upturned and feathers painted on to become precarious-looking helmets. Kitchen tongs are belted together to form what looks like exoskeletal creatures. Suleman's materials include drain covers, nails, showerheads and fasteners drawing on an *arte povera* modernist tradition that also nods to minimalism through its use of repetition of a single item through an entire work. The use of domestic items can also be understood as a reference to the legacy of feminist art, but Suleman herself stresses the formal quality of these works referring to them as sketches in three dimensions. Suleman studied at the University of Karachi and lives and works in Karachi.

Qayyum is interested in exploring how war and conflict have reduced the value of human life to an insect and uses the motif of the cockroach repeatedly in her works. Qayyum's subject matter is a deliberate contrast to the exquisite techniques that she employs, that draw on her education of studying miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore. Texts in her work refer to myths and facts about the cockroach or at other times reference war. Qayyum very deliberately references entomology museum displays. This is both at a formal level but also again is linked to her interest in the way that conflict is archived, recorded, justified and presented to the public. Classification and labeling take on a sinister note that is at odds with the intricate beauty of the works. Like traditional miniature paintings the works operate at a number of levels, some more overt than others.

Both Suleman and Qayyum's works share a sense of irony or even a deliberate sense of ironic failure. Cockroaches are regarded as pests and an ongoing exploration of them seems to have a slightly obsessive edge to it that is doomed to go nowhere in particular. Suleman's sculptures are slightly dysfunctional – helmets that you can't wear or fragile, skeletal creatures bent into gentle curves, folding in on themselves. The notion of the 'failed state' can refer to a temporary blip or something much more large-scale. It could also be a beginning point to build or re-build something new, fragile at first but with the potential to point to new directions.

**For further press information and visuals please contact  
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**Aicon Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm**

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