

Paradise Row

Press Release

Shezad Dawood The Jewels of Aptor

9/10–13/11/2010

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Gallery hours:
Mon – Fri / 10 am – 6 pm
open until 8 pm on Thursdays

The waves flung up against the purple glow
of double sleeplessness. Along the piers
the ships return; but sailing I would go
through double rings of fire, double fears.
So therefore let your bright vaults heave the night
about with ropes of wind and points of light
and say, as all the rolling stars go, 'I
have stood my feet on rock and seen the sky.'

The opening lines of the epic: *Of the conflicts between Leptar
and Aptor*, by the one-armed poet Geo

'Though you have struggled, wandered, travelled far,
It is yourselves you see and what you are.'
(Who sees the Lord? It is himself each sees;
What ant's sight could discern the Pleiades?
What anvil could be lifted by an ant?
Or could a fly subdue an elephant?)
'How much you thought you knew and saw; but you
Now know that all you trusted was untrue.'

The Conference of the Birds, Farid Ud-Din Attar

This exhibition describes flight paths and suggests
arcs of movement through realms of esoteric wisdom.

The Jewels of Aptor is Shezad Dawood's second
solo show at Paradise Row. It continues Dawood's
ongoing practice of both revealing and creating
moments of synthesis and unexpected harmony
between seemingly disparate, bodies of knowledge,
cultural traditions and value systems.

Accordingly the exhibition takes various texts
as its staring point; *The Conference of Birds*, a twelfth-
century poem by the Sufi mystic Farid Ud-Din Attar,
in which the heretical message that divinity flows
through all things is concealed in poetic allegory of
shimmering beauty, *The Unlimited Dream Company* by
J G Ballard, in which a Dionysian figure miraculously
emerges from a submerged plane, crashed into the
Thames and catalyses the transformation of the
London suburb of Shepperton into a jungle, full of
fevered desire, and *The Jewels of Aptor*, the 1962 novel
by cult science fiction writer Samuel R Delany, set
in a post-apocalyptic future in which a poet saves a
princess trapped in a irradiated land, full of mutants.

The show comprises of a careful variety of esoteric
symbols printed and painted onto vintage textiles and
a series of sculptures, suspended in mid-air, of strange
and seductive exotic birds flying through rings of
coloured neon.

The works engage with the idea of eternal
recurrence and represent a journey through, the
suterranean, irrational and esoteric foundations of
Modernism, a morass of subcultural theories, such as
those of Erich von Daniken, that link ancient esoteric
wisdom with alien cultures and the great bodies of
mystical, religious and philosophical thought that
have shaped human consciousness.

Works from this new series are being
simultaneously exhibited at the Busan Biennale,
Korea, 2010. Dawood has recently participated in
Rude Britannia, Tate Britain, 2010, The Empire
Strikes Back, Indian Art Today, The Saatchi Gallery,
2010, Altermodern / 4th Tate Triennale, Tate Britain,
2009 and East-West Divan, 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009.