

JOHN KEANE  
SCRATCHING THE SURFACE  
JOINING THE DOTS

12 JANUARY - 4 FEBRUARY 2012  
PRIVATE VIEW WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 6 - 8PM



*Figure at an Inquiry No.2* 2010, Oil on linen, 90 x 120 cm / 35½ x 47¼ in

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It is now twenty years since John Keane's appointment as the Imperial War Museum's official artist during the Gulf War first propelled him to national prominence, and since then his work has continued to address contemporary events from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and the UK. *Scratching the Surface Joining the Dots* is John Keane's first solo show of new paintings in three years and this new exhibition finds Keane deeply immersed in the upheavals of the contemporary world. His abiding preoccupation is in seeking to address the unfolding conflicts of morality and the morality of conflict in the 21st century - however the bleakness of the subject matter is, as ever, mitigated by his hallmark wit and acuity of perception.

Having a common thread rather than an overarching theme, most of these paintings refer to recent events in the Middle East. Several new works dwell on Tony Blair's mercurial appearance at the Chilcot Inquiry into the Iraq war, whilst other paintings range in topic over the demonstrations in Tahrir Square, the release of the 'Lockerbie Bomber', collateral killings in Iraq, and not least the disastrous financial crisis that continues to engulf the western world.

Keane's work over the last thirty years has dealt with difficult subjects which are by definition historical, but whose recurring themes continue to reassert themselves with uncanny cyclical relevance - be it urban un-rest, cynical practice at the heart of the financial world, or the stranglehold of the Murdoch Empire. This new series of authoritative paintings, with their unashamed commitment to the painterly process, demonstrate Keane's continuing fascination and bemusement with the contemporary world.

John Keane was born in England in 1954. *Scratching the Surface Joining the Dots* demonstrates the artist's continued interest in global issues of conflict focusing on specific locations. He has exhibited internationally and his work is in public collections including Chase Manhattan Bank, New York; the BBC; Christie's Corporate Collection; Glasgow Museums; the Imperial War Museum, London; Detroit Institute of Fine Art, Michigan; National Portrait Gallery, London; and the United Nations, New York.

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