

# JOHN KEANE

## THE WISDOM OF HINDSIGHT

20 MAY - 27 JUNE 2015

PRIVATE VIEW  
THURSDAY 21 MAY 6 - 9PM

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"When I first went out to the Gulf twenty five years ago, there was no way of knowing that events taking place then would still be pre-occupying the world a quarter of a century later. A thread of continuity can be seen through my output in the subsequent years, and while the subject matter in each series was chosen individually for its own sake, with hindsight it can be seen how this history ties together." - John Keane

Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce two major exhibitions by former official British war artist John Keane, to celebrate thirty years since his first solo show at Flowers Gallery. **The Wisdom of Hindsight**, at the Kingsland Road gallery, will present a survey of works produced throughout the artist's career, exploring the theme of military, social and political conflict around the world.

Marking twenty five years since he was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum as the official artist of the Gulf War (in August 1990), the exhibition will include paintings from the *Gulf* series, which brought Keane to national prominence and even caused tabloid outrage over interpretations of its imagery. In 2002, Keane returned to the Middle East, this time to Israel and Palestine on a trip arranged by Christian Aid, where he documented images of the people living within a landscape continually altered by violence.

In the years following, Keane's sights turned to the rise of global terror, to describe his impression of the consequences of wars waged in distant locations, which were being brought closer to home. Using the internet increasingly as the source of his imagery, Keane also started to introduce digital means of production. The inclusion of inkjet printing in the early 2000's brought a crisp under-layer to his paintings, while his brushwork and use of squeegees to drag paint across the canvas emulated the distortions of screen resolution and pixelation.

*Untitled Terrorist (3)*, 2004, is selected from a series made in response to the 2002 Moscow Theatre Siege, during which the audience were subjected to a 57-hour ordeal from which many of them would never emerge alive. Staged during the Chechen War for Independence the siege delivered the brutality of the war to the heart of Moscow.

This theme is further explored in paintings made in the wake of the events of September 11, such as *Submission I*, 2005, from *Guantanamo* - a series of digitally manipulated images of Camp X-Ray detainees at the US military base of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. With a palette dominated by the fluorescent orange jumpsuits worn by the prisoners, the work resonates with Keane's most recent series of paintings, which will be presented at Flowers Gallery, Cork Street in the simultaneous exhibition **Speaking Power to Truth** (also 20 May - 27 June).

The recurrence of the suit in new works such as *Kneel*, *Jump* and *Distillation of Terror*, this time with reference to recent events in the Middle East, suggests both an enduring cycle of conflict, and Keane's prescience in selecting subject matter that has gone on to perpetually haunt the headlines.

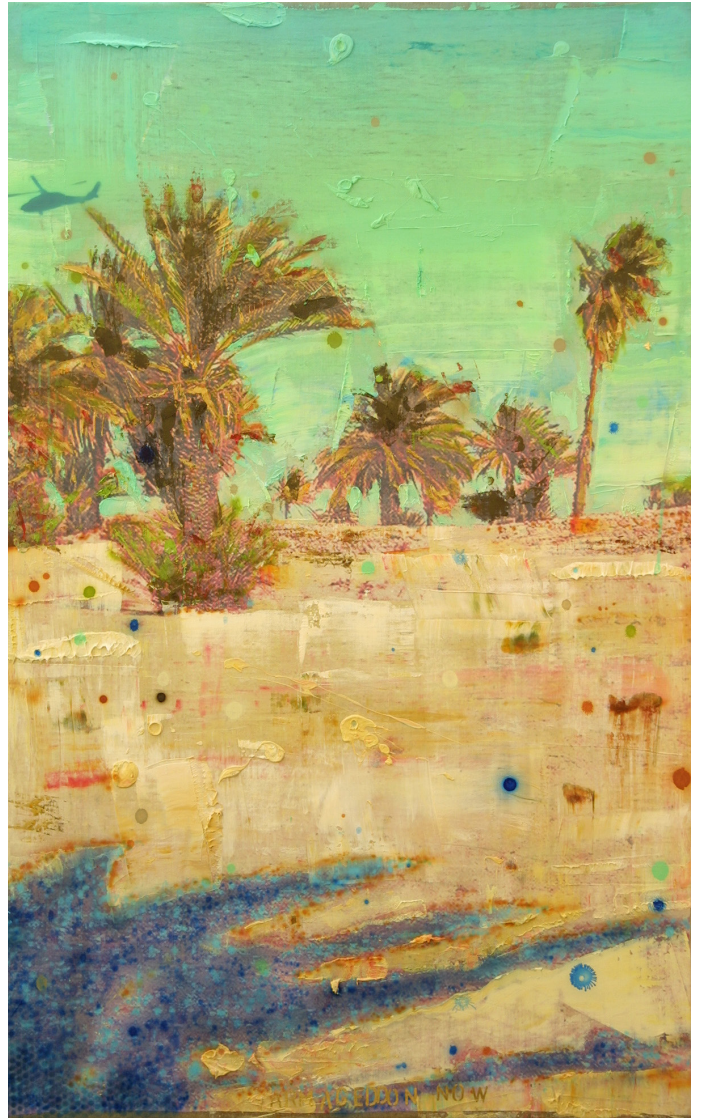


*Laser Guided*, 1991, Oil on canvas, 210 x 173 cm / 82 3/4 x 68 in





*Untitled (Terrorist) 3*, 2004, Acrylic on inkjet on paper on jute, 47 x 82 cm, 18 1/2 x 32 1/4 in



*Armageddon Now II*, 2003, Oil, gold leaf and inkjet on viscose on linen, 132 x 82 cm / 52 x 32 1/4 in



*Submission I*, 2005, Oil on linen, 86.5 x 92 cm / 34 x 36 1/4 in

## ABOUT JOHN KEANE

John Keane was born in Hertfordshire in 1954. His subject matter has included conflicts in Northern Ireland, Central America, and the Middle East, sometimes working with organisations such as Greenpeace and Christian Aid. He was commissioned as the official recorder of the Gulf War by the Imperial War Museum in 1990. In recent years he has also become known for commissioned portraits of notable individuals such as Mo Mowlam, Jon Snow and Kofi Annan. He has exhibited internationally and his work is in public collections including Chase Manhattan Bank, New York; Christie's Corporate Collection, London; Glasgow Museums: Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; Imperial War Museum, London; and the Detroit Institute of Fine Art, Michigan. He lives and works in London. John Keane is the winner of the Main Prize for the Aesthetica Art Prize 2015.

A comprehensive new monograph by Mark Lawson has been published to coincide with the exhibitions. In *Troubles My Sight: The Art of John Keane*, Mark Lawson draws on extended conversations with John Keane in both his early and late career to chart the way in which the artist has turned an art-form often now regarded as conservative - painting - to radical political purposes. This 240 page book includes over 200 colour illustrations and introductory texts by Brian Eno and Alex Danchev.

## NOTESTO EDITORS

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm  
 Image Credits: *Images courtesy of Flowers Gallery, London and New York*  
 For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes -  
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