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Summary of the doctoral dissertation "We have one heart"
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"We have one heart" is a quotation from the letters of Farouk Al Kalida, my husband Adam's Iraqi-Kurdish father found after thirty-seven years, to Adam's mother Halina. These letters, dating from the 1970s, and the tragic love of Adam's parents are a point of departure for my doctoral dissertation, which comprises seven chapters.

The thematic axis of both my dissertation and exhibition, however, is my father-in-law's later fate – his wartime traumas of the 1980s (the times of Saddam Hussein) – which situates him in the role of an everyman, as it resembles the lives of present-day nomads and refugees, not only Kurds or Arabs.

Farouk's individual story triggers my reflections on the economic and geopolitical mechanisms which determine whether people are able to maintain close ties or they get forced to live in separation, which degrades them. I consider the following questions: How does living in the time of war or under threat shape us? How does war really look like today? Where does it situate us? Are European fears of a wave of migration really justified in the face of violence perpetrated in the Middle East over the last decades (here I rely on Paweł Smoleński's and Dawid Warszawski's accounts of the Kurdish Holocaust)? Finally, how should the artist behave vis-à-vis such borderline situations – can he or she remain just a witness? Seeking to answer this question, I evoke two contemporary artists, Hiwa K and Francis Alÿs, whose work is much concerned with Kurdistan.

In my theoretical reflections, I often quote my father-in-law; I am interested in the way he tries to work through his war traumas by means of drawing and poetry, in which he refers to ancient Persian, Kurdish and Arab culture.

At my request, a psychological analysis of Farouk's wartime drawings was performed by Dr. Przemysław Piotrowski, head of the Department of Court Psychology and Criminology at the Institute of Applied Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Kraków. His expert opinion leaves no doubts: "In traumatic life situations, when someone experiences something that had been unimaginable, words fail him or her. The accumulation of dramatic events, incomparable to anything else, makes it very difficult to put into words one's observations, feelings and thoughts. The difficulty results not only from the amount of intense experiences, however, but also from the fact that for participants of events such as natural calamities, brutal crimes or wars, giving verbal accounts of these experiences, especially to persons who have never found themselves in such situations, seems futile at the level of communication; they believe that the dramatic nature of the events cannot be rendered in this way, that it does not allow for their experiences to be understood. Some sensitive individuals then seek other means of expression, such as music, literature or drawing".

An interesting thematic motif of the dissertation is that it recalls the close ties between Poland and Iraq in the 1970s and up until 1990s; back then, the situation was completely different from what we see today. Many Poles went to Iraq to work on the construction of roads, bridges, power plants, residential housing and administrative buildings. When their contracts ended, most of them brought back a considerable fortune, which allowed them to develop their business activity at home.

As the main part of my doctoral project, the exhibition constitutes an attempt at confronting subjects such as the experience of nomadism, relationships between people of different

nationalities, as well as the consequences of war and its influence on human psyche, also seen from a philosophical perspective. As far as my own previous artistic output is concerned, this project is innovative insofar as it draws on using family archives and filtering the knowledge gathered in this way through various means of expressions, compiled so as to create a coherent vision of loneliness and tragedy in human life.

The dissertation is concluded with a short list of works to be exhibited under the heading “We have one heart”, namely: Farouk’s poem *Farouk’s Small Wars*, a spatial drawing built on the skeleton of a refugee tent, a short video, a mural, and a hand-woven carpet with a fragment of Farouk’s wartime drawing.

The exhibition will be open from 16 March till 29 April at Łażnia 2 gallery in Gdańsk-Nowy Port.