

## *Harbingers of Doom*

2020

Faux fur, polyester, plywood, digital collage print on satin, storm glass

Courtesy the artist

*Holding Patterns*, Ruqayah's first solo exhibition, considers the precarious relationship between futility and hope in practices of dream divination. Divination is defined as the act of predicting or foreseeing future events by interpreting omens and supernatural symbols. In a society that champions the rational mind, irrational cultural practices such as divination and dream interpretation become increasingly seductive coping mechanisms. In this exhibition, Ruqayah looks to her own dreams to pose questions about the hopefulness or hopelessness of dream divination. On the one hand, the dreamer is the visionary, the herald, the harbinger of change. On the other, the dreamer is naive, and any sense of meaning or value gleaned in dreams is discouraged and disregarded as flimsy.

In the lead up to the exhibition, Ruqayah took note of a recurring dream in which enormous black hounds slowly approach her and rest their heads in her lap. Glad to offer a place of rest for these melancholic beasts, Ruqayah observes each dog quietly close its mouth around her knee, and gradually sink its fangs deep into her flesh. They don't mean to hurt her, but they do it anyway.

In the sculptural installation, *Harbingers of Doom*, Ruqayah explores the grim mood of this depressive recurrent dream. These headless, limbless beasts have lethargic yet articulate forms, echoing Ruqayah's sad canines. Some pool into the ground whilst others appear to rise from it. Viewers cannot help but ache with a primal desire to touch the fur of these wallowing creatures. A tear-drop shaped storm glass protrudes from each body, acting both as a container and lens through which inner and outer worlds can be observed.

The storm glass was popularised among illiterate British fishermen in the 1800s, as a tool for predicting weather conditions. The hermetically sealed thermometer contains a liquid that produces feathery crystals. These crystals transform in density and size, subtly responding to shifting weather conditions. Though once considered an invaluable piece of technology among the working class, the storm glass is not without limitation – Its efficacy in weather prediction is questionable. Nevertheless, this glass divination tool persists to quietly mutate in response to its environment, and functions as a fecund symbol of both hope and hopelessness.

The now obsolete weather instrument's obscure origins are intrinsic to the device's intrigue and its tenuous connections between science, innate human intuition and psychic mysticism. By re-imagining the storm glass as her own crystal ball, Ruqayah makes sense of her seemingly futile dreams and sees in its cloudy, crystallised liquid, an intimate yet expansive universe.

Says Ruqayah: “The territory of dreams has long offered fantastic escape from the bleakness and violence of our waking lives. Who cares? Nothing worth saying is important. Nobody cares about your dreams. These sculptural works incorporate mutating weather instruments, textures and motifs from my recurring dreams, and serve as perilous and melancholic illusions of respite”.

Here, Ruqayah offers deeper mysteries of embodiment, and directs our senses to our interconnection with dreaming, watery landscapes and scientific inferences. When viewers encounter the storm glasses nestled in the bodies of the beasts, they are offered tiny universes to peer through where houseflies, vomiting stone faces and vivid dreamscapes can be found. These small worlds are fraught with deeper mysteries key to unravelling the unfathomable mysticism of Ruqayah's subconscious.

*Self-fulfilling prophecies*

2020

Digital collage print on paper, pins

Courtesy the artist

A found image of a dead eel being eaten by a fly is digitally collaged and mutated to form the statement “I suspect I shall die disappointed.” The eel corpse has been stretched, blended and reframed through digital interventions, then physically cut into sinewy forms that echo both Gothic and Arabic calligraphy. Borne out of a period of sustained disappointment in personal relationships, this work is a playfully morbid litany that reflects on self-fulfilling prophecies and the tautological nature of disappointment.