

What is a "National" Exhibition? Understanding Australia's 'The National'

GUO JIAN

Guo Jian (郭健) and his art, are products of the last fifty years of violence and tumultuousness in China, from the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s to the Sino-Vietnam war at the beginning of the 1980s, through to the horrors of the Tiananmen Square Incident. At the end of the 1970s at age seventeen, he enlisted in the People's Liberation Army during a recruitment drive to support the Sino-Vietnamese war, initiated by the country's then leader Deng Xiaoping. The grim reality of his military experiences permanently transformed him from the idealistic young promoter of the ideology of the army and communist party as he served as a propaganda poster painter. As with many of his peers, his military experiences left him both cynical and with a new found critical perspective. His time in the army would later serve as fertile source material for his artwork. In 1989, as a former soldier, he was nearly killed by the PLA in Tiananmen Square. Guo Jian now lives in Australia.



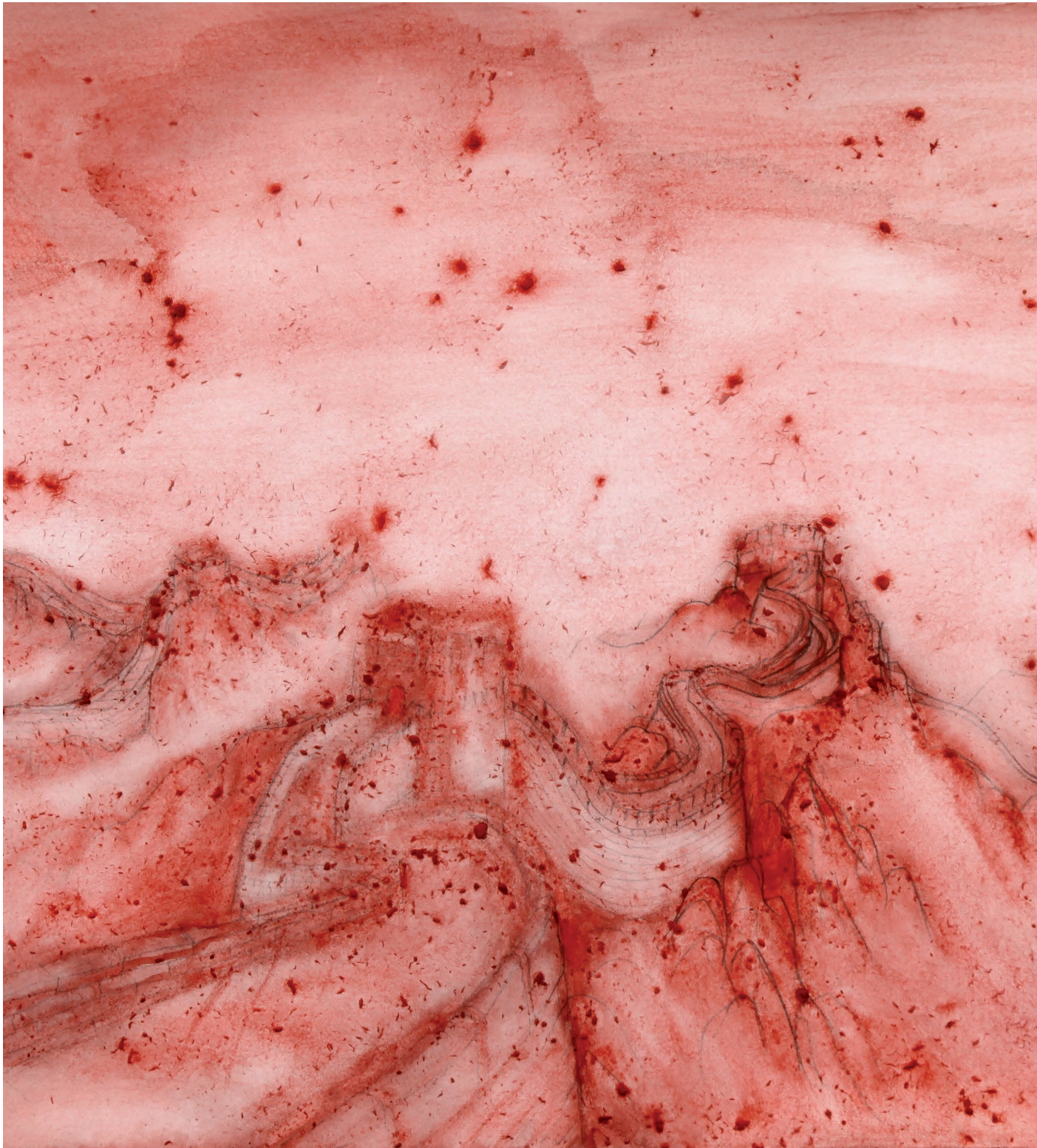


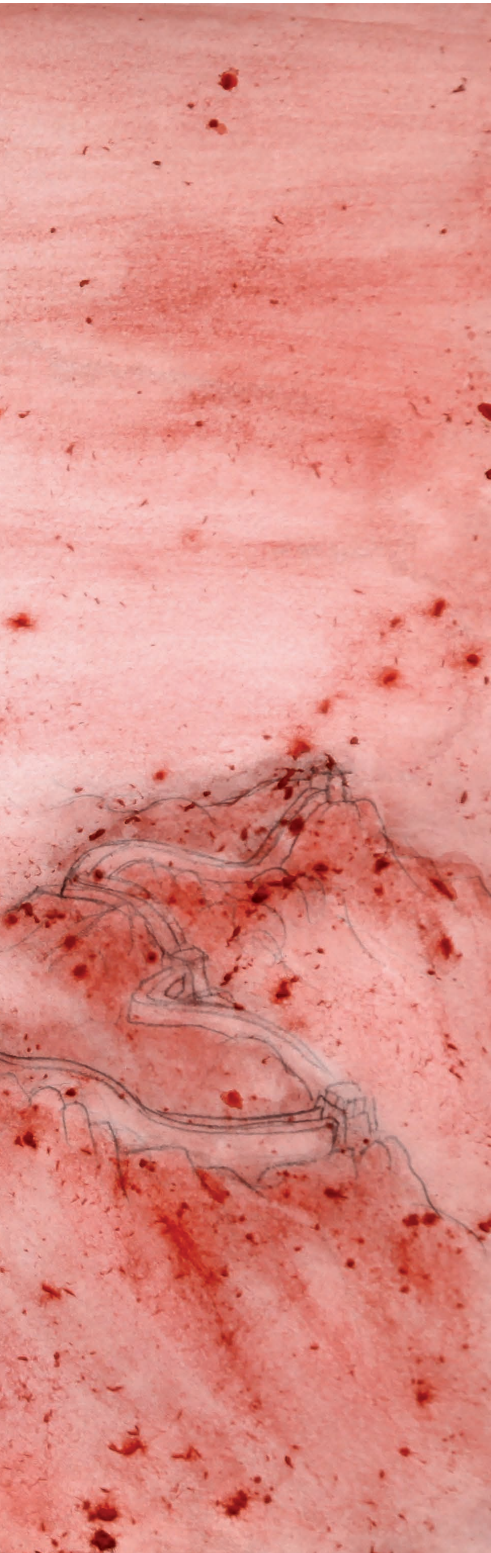












KHADIM ALI

I became other. I became one of the wearied, dusty faces from across the border. And although there was no boundary between us, and we were all citizens of one country, suddenly an invisible border of horror was drawn around me that made it impossible to get out. Khadim Ali

Hazara artist Khadim Ali explores the normalization of war and the experience of refugees through a series of poetic installations and paintings. Ali's interest in tapestries developed soon after his parents' home in Quetta, Pakistan was destroyed by suicide bombers. Amongst the rubble and debris left from the blast, a collection of rugs and weavings remained the only thing intact: miraculously able to withstand the reign of terror inflicted upon his family and community. Ali explores the impact of war, trauma and displacement drawing parallels from the Book of Shahnameh, a Persian literary masterpiece comprising of 50,000 couplets and written between c. 977 and 1010 CE. Just like the many great mythic tales in the Shahnameh, Ali's intricate works depict stories of demons and angels, conquest and war through the lens of the persecuted Hazara community.













ADAM GECZY



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