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WAFAA BILAL UNVEILS NEW ARTPACE WORKS

During his time at Artpace Bilal found inspiration for his Artpace project, "The Things I Could Tell..." through a 9th century Islamic scientist named Avicenna who used color as a tool to diagnose and treat illnesses. This has continued through the ages, with modern-day scientists, psychiatrists, and healers using color as a kind of therapy. With this in mind, Bilal is offering Artpace's gallery space for people to explore their emotional response to color. During the opening reception, viewers were able to interact with a U.S. veteran of the Iraq war who selected a color for the space that represents his own personal experience with conflict and trauma. Bilal not only experiments with his viewers' reactions to color, but also to how he heals after his own experiences as an Iraqi refugee. By miniaturizing the Saddam Hussein colored glass figurines, Bilal simultaneously minimizes the fear associated with the former dictator of Iraq

Bilal admits that the work impacts him personally as, by his admission, Bilal continues to struggle with after-effects of the Iraq War due to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Bilal states, "This project relates to my individual experience with PTSD; which is common in U.S. Veterans of the Iraq War, and many other people who experience severe trauma. In particular, I'm very concerned with how veterans are treated, or unfortunately in many cases, not treated after they come home." During the opening reception a guest veteran was present, providing an overt focus on PTSD and the effects of war, which remain largely invisible to society. The viewer and the veteran had a face-to-face, but silent interaction. The guest veteran, James Radcliffe, will return on Friday, August 28 to perform in Bilal's space.

Undoubtedly the viewer plays a key role in Bilal's installation. To Bilal, installation art is about decentering the viewer and raising questions, rather than providing a strict interpretation. This project is, in part, about his own trauma and creating a platform for visibility, but he leaves it open to viewers to explore additional possibilities related to their own life experiences.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST;

Iraqi-born artist Wafaa Bilal, an Associate Arts Professor at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, is known internationally for his online performative and interactive works, which provoke dialogue about international politics and internal dynamics. Previous projects reference surveillance, the mundane, and the things we leave behind. In Bilal's 2007 project, Domestic Tension, which addressed the Iraq war, the artist spent a month in a Chicago gallery with a paintball gun, live streaming the space on the internet and inviting online participants to activate the gun's aim to shoot at him in real time. Bilal graduated from the University of New Mexico and obtained an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2008, City Lights

published *Shoot an Iraqi: Art, Life and Resistance Under the Gun*, about Bilal's life and the Domestic Tension project.

ABOUT ARTPACE:

Artpace is a contemporary art space located in downtown San Antonio, Texas with residences, exhibitions, and education programs that nurture the freedom to dream. Artpace supports the creative process and engages audiences with the most innovative art and artists from around the world. Since 1995, Artpace has welcomed more than 200 artists through its renowned International Artist-in-Residence program. Annually, Artpace hosts three residencies, which each feature one Texas-based artist, one national artist, and one international artist, who are selected by a notable guest curator. Each eight-week residency culminates in a two-month exhibition on site. The mission of this program is to provide artists with unparalleled resources that allow them to experiment with new ideas and take provocative risks. www.artpace.org.