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B L U E

n a t i o n a l a r t g a l l e r y

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BLUE

NATIONAL ART GALLERY

MALE' MALDIVES

2009

National Art Gallery

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Front cover: Detail of Blue 17, Oil on Linen,
45.5 x 45.5 cm, 2007

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National Art Gallery
Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture



title: Blue 27 size: 61 x 76.5 cm medium: Oil on Linen year: 2007

The Soothing Anxiety of Blue

The exhibition of works by Samah Ahmed, all titled "Blue" with varying numbers – hence the title of the exhibition ' Blue' – evokes deep responses. It takes on further undertones when you know that they are all direct references to the azure blue surrounding the islands that make up the Maldivian archipelago. It is something all Maldivians experience as they grow up. The color has fond memories attached to it. Picnics with friends and family perhaps. Or a more serious setting, maybe from when you were already an adult.

Whatever the context, we all value such memories of an innocent perception and experience of nature. The fluid line running through the experience of these Blue canvases is reflected in the contemplation of such things as the notion of childhood innocence against the mysterious realities of nature – symbolized by the blue of the ocean as a force. The natural beauty of the Maldives and the fragile eco-system on which it is inhabited rest on the delicate balance between a world whose fast deterioration is only offset by the

many environmental consequences of global warming and the numerous human interventions sustained.

The turquoise blue of the lagoons surrounding the Maldivian atolls have brought calm and tranquility to many. Perhaps the most reliable testimony to this are the thousands of tourists who visit the country every year in order to experience these wondrous lagoons. Hence, the primary impression we are left with is an innocent and pleasurable time spent with nature. However, the color blue also reminds us of the ocean and by way of association, global warming and sea level rise. Along with other low-lying island nations, Maldives is expected to suffer the worst consequences of climate change. And according to some environmentalists, the country might not even be there in 80 years. But this remains an unanswered question and a persistent cause for anxiety among Maldivians.

Mamduh Waheed

National Art Gallery, March 2009

Artist Statement

I would describe my work as a combination of both spiritual and emotional experience. Coming from the Maldives, where land surface is only one per cent, it is the warm, clear blue sea of the tropics that provides my natural inspiration to paint. This collection of 'Blue' series paintings are not just mere paintings of any sea. To me, it is the sea I swam in as I child. It is about a journey, evoking fond childhood memories, about that aching desire to return to those long gone-by idyllic days of carefree innocence. Reminiscing about childhood experiences, is a familiar territory that most, if not all of us adults return to frequently by various different means and for very different reasons.

From my perspective, I elect to return and relive that by using paint on canvas, as opposed to any vocal, written or physical declaration. The dark, threatening, receding backgrounds you see in some of the canvases here, I cannot ever recollect visualising with any fear as a child. Rather, only as

a vast 'unknown' in the distance, just more and then more space to venture out far far and away.

The western obsession about "paradise" and the 'Robinson Crusoe' desire to be stranded on a desert island provides its own fascination for me as an artist. I want the viewer to experience this sense of "escapism" in this work from a different perspective as opposed to the norm of seeing just another pretty picture in a tourist brochure or postcard.

At the same time, I also touch upon on a more sombre and serious reality of nature faced by the Maldives. 'Global warming' is very real and persistent geographic threat faced by all us Maldivians - would we exist in a hundred years time? The lack of land and the absence of any living being in my paintings is a stark reminder that we do not have the answer to this burning question. Is the view on my canvas all that will be seen in reality in a hundred years time? – I wonder.



title: Blue 31 (detail)
size: 30 x 30 cm (x 6)
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2007

ARTIST BIO

SAMAH AHMED - 1968

1968	Born in Male', Maldives.
1970s – late 1980s	Early education in Male' and partly in the UK.
2001 – 2002	Foundation studies in Fine Art at Byam Shaw School of Art, London.
2002 – 2005	BA (Hons) in Fine Art (Painting) at Chelsea College of Art and Design, London.



title: Blue 05

size: 40.5 x 40.5 cm

medium: Oil on Linen

year: 2006



title: Blue 06

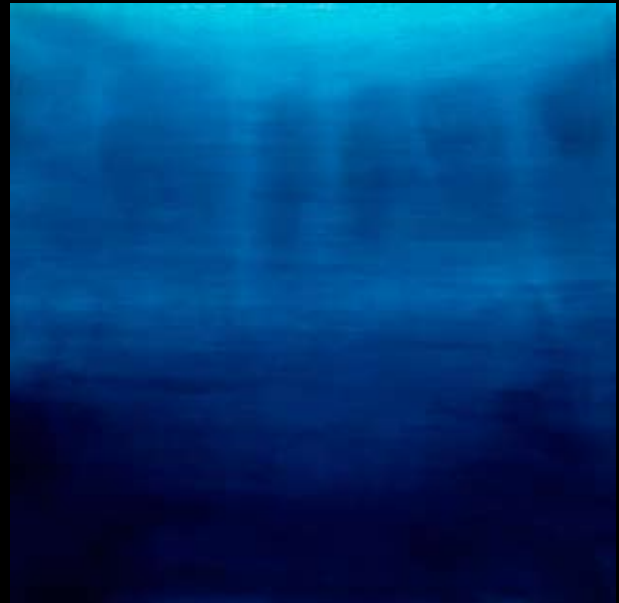
size: 40.5 x 40.5 cm

medium: Oil on Linen

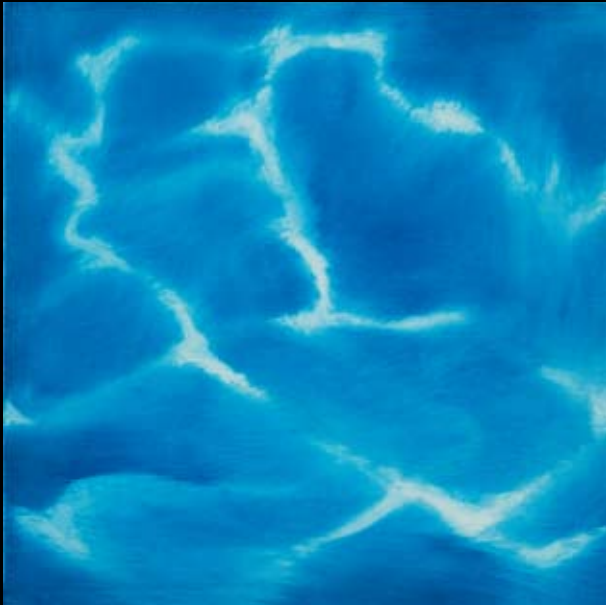
year: 2006



title: Blue 07
size: 41.5 x 41.5 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2006



title: Blue 08
size: 40.5 x 40.5 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2006



title: Blue 13
size: 40.7 x 40.7 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2006



title: Blue 14
size: 40.6 x 40.6 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2006



title: Blue 15
size: 40.5 x 40.5 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2006



title: Blue 16
size: 45.8 x 45.8 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2007



title: Blue 17
size: 45.5 x 45.5 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2007



title: Blue 18
size: 45.5 x 45.5 cm
medium: Oil on Linen
year: 2007



title: Blue 24

size: 40.8 x 40.8 cm

medium: Oil on Linen

year: 2007

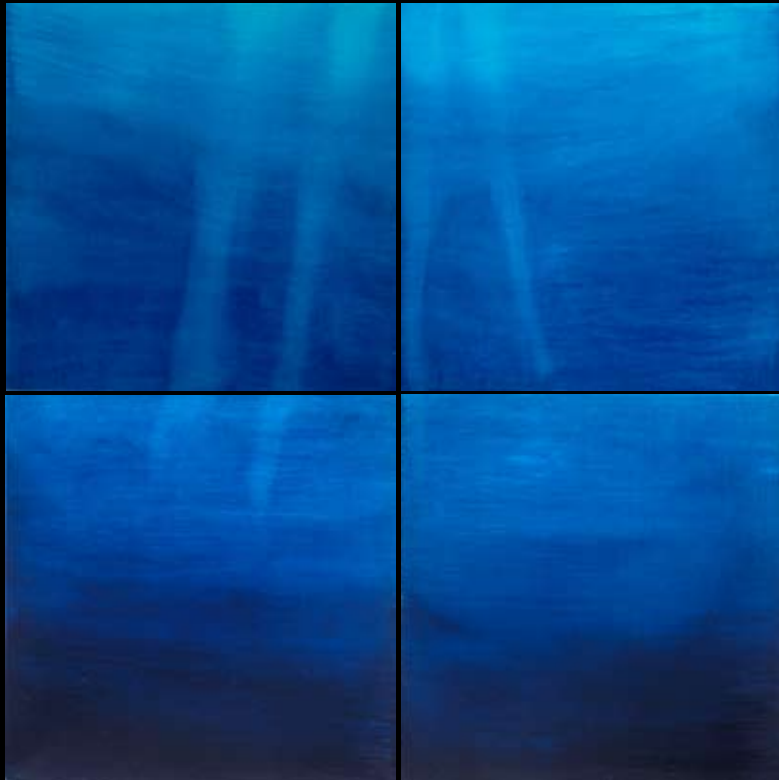


title: Blue 25

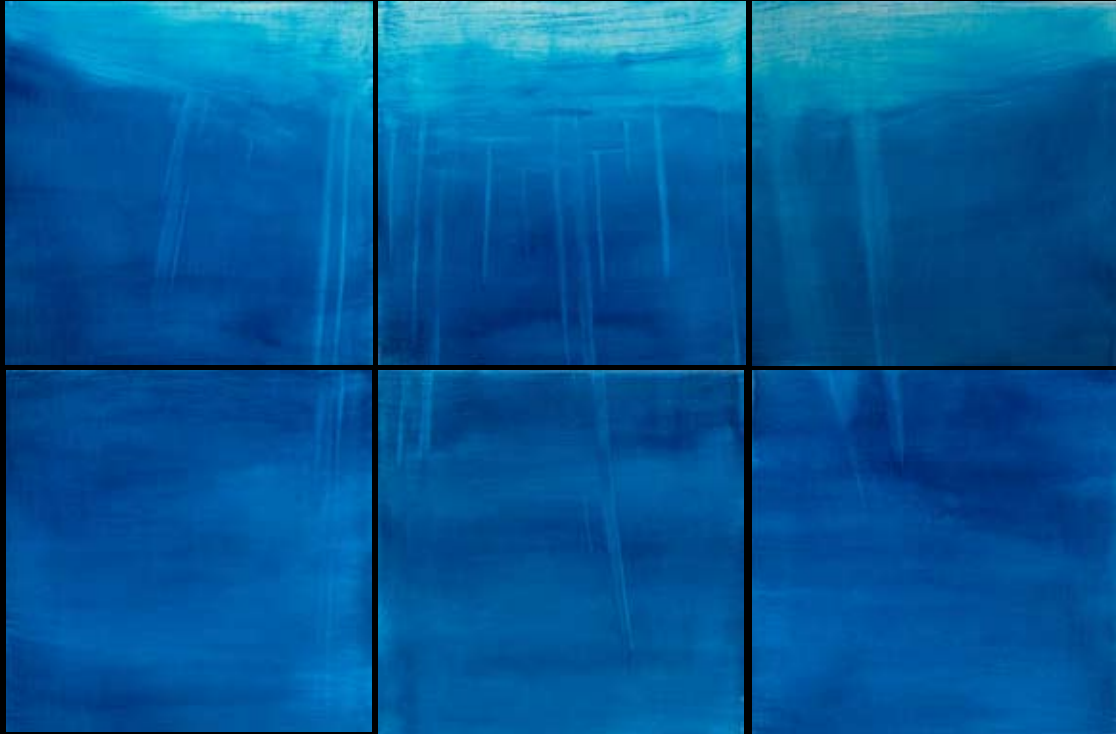
size: 45.7 x 45.7 cm

medium: Oil on Linen

year: 2007



title: Blue 30 size: 30 x 30 cm (x 4) medium: Oil on Linen year: 2007



title: Blue 31 size: 30 x 30 cm (per peice - 6 pieces) medium: Oil on Linen year: 2007

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