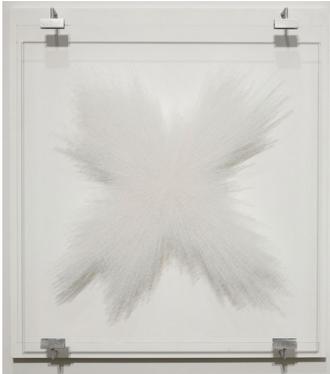


# SEAN KELLY

Mason, Brook, "Abject Truth: Idris Khan Explores the Dire Reality of Global Displacement," *Wallpaper*, September 15, 2015.

## Wallpaper\*

### **Abject truth: Idris Khan explores the dire reality of global displacement**



'Idris Khan: Overture', on view until 24 October, illuminates the plight of refugees in the Middle East and North Africa. Photography: Jason Wyche. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York

While Picasso's searing 1937 masterpiece *Guernica* reflected the havoc of the Spanish Civil War to great acclaim, the London based artist Idris Khan too draws on contemporary violence. But rather than depict figures, Khan turns to language as well as numbers to reveal the current refugee crisis in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa.

Now, Khan's subtle – but searing – oeuvre is spot lit in an exhibition at Chelsea's Sean Kelly Gallery: 'Idris Khan: Overture'.

We're in a deeply troubled time when millions of refugees escaping conflict is the norm,' says Khan, whose father is from Pakistan and grew up in a Muslim household.

For his site-specific wall painting *Displacement*, Khan transcribed the now harrowing numbers of those seeking refuge in Europe and others in crisis, along with some of their personal stories, in a circular format. He layers over his finely stamped text in Arabic and a similar text in English. While Khan relies on language, the lines of the sentences meld into a single image both haunting and riveting.

In an additional radical departure from the paintings, photographs and drawings on view, Khan has – for the first time – also turned to glass as medium. His large scale work *Overture* consists of seven panels of glass onto which he has stamped the same message in both Arabic and English. The sheets of glass – each more than four feet in height – are suspended from an aluminium frame.

I sought to give a sense of how disturbing news can disappear from our minds, yet always be there," Khan says.



The large scale work *Overture*, 2015, sees Khan utilise glass for the first time. Photography: Jason Wyche. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York



The notion of how this message is obscured by repetition is at the heart of Khan's plea to remember individual tragedy. Photography: Jason Wyche. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York



*Conflicting Lines*, 2015, a similar rumination on the horrors of war, was also on show at Victoria Miro Mayfair in London earlier this year. Photography courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly, New York



Khan's haunting *Numbers*, 2015, plays on the dehumanising nature of realigning human beings as mere statistics. Photography courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly, New York



*Why Do They Go*, 2015, casts a literal shadow of ISIS on to the throng behind the central hooded figure. Photography: Jason Wyche. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York