



# Wafaa Bilal: 168:01

Wafaa Bilal, *168:01*, 2016, installation. Photo by Frank Piccolo.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MAY 2, 2017

May 5 to June 25, 2017

Dunlop Central Gallery, 2311- 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Reception: Friday, May 5, 7:00 pm

Panel Discussion: Monday, June 5, 7:00 pm, RPL Film Theatre, 2311- 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Curated by Srimoyee Mitra, Organized and Circulated by the Art Gallery of Windsor

In *168:01*, Iraqi-born, New York-based artist Wafaa Bilal takes the *Bayt al-Hikma*, or House of Wisdom, as a starting point for a sculptural installation of a library, filled with empty white books. *The Bayt al-Hikma* housed the largest library in the world until it was destroyed in a Mongol siege. According to some accounts, the books were thrown into the Tigris River, the pages bleeding ink for 168 hours, until they were drained of knowledge.

Throughout the exhibition, visitors are encouraged to donate books from a wishlist compiled by The College of Fine Arts at the University of Baghdad, helping to rebuild their library, which was destroyed in 2003. This exchange demonstrates the power of individuals to rectify violence inflicted on cultural spaces.

Bilal also presents *The Ashes Series*, a powerful collection of photographs. Painstakingly detailed miniature reproductions of interior spaces damaged during the Iraq War are scattered with twenty-one grams of human ashes. Hauntingly vacant and strangely beautiful, they articulate both loss and hope.

An opening reception for *168:01* will be held on Friday, May 5 at 7:00 pm. Expanding on themes of the exhibition, Dunlop Art Gallery will also host *Discussing Libraries, War, and Rebuilding Centres of Knowledge* on Monday, June 5 at 7:00 pm at RPL Film Theatre. This panel invites RPL Director Jeff Barber, Dr. Sami Helewa, S.J., Assistant Professor, Campion College, and Dr. Elizabeth Matheson, Curator, Strandline Curatorial Collective, to share varied perspectives on the importance of libraries, the historical contexts for Bilal's work, and the contemporary role of the socially-engaged artist/activist.

For more information:

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