

Timothy Taylor



Shezad Dawood, *Leviathan Legacy: part 1*, 2018.

Shezad Dawood *Leviathan Legacy: part 1* ArtReview Asia Xiàn Chǎng 8 — 11 November 2018 West Bund Art & Design

Leviathan Legacy: part 1 is Shezad Dawood's new immersive VR experience, following his ground-breaking VR work *Kalimpong*, first exhibited at Timothy Taylor, London in 2016. *Kalimpong* went on to tour to the Kunsthal Rotterdam (2017), the Rubin Museum, New York (2018) and is currently on view at the Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi.

The *Leviathan Legacy: part 1* experience begins on a beach in Cuba at nightfall, 150 years into the future. Exploring the beach, you understand that the economic disparity between rich and poor has widened, as you see a brightly lit luxury marina with a tall wall keeping you (the viewer) out.

A mysterious voice then coaxes you into the dark ocean and there you meet the protagonist of the story: an enlarged Louisiana Red Swamp Crayfish (currently one of the most invasive species in the water) with telepathic abilities. The viewer will encounter mutant lionfish, pulsating jellyfish and coral that have survived through human intervention and events spurred by global climate change.

From this research based discourse, Dawood proposes what our future landscape might look like and some of the key issues that might shape it, such as hybridogenesis: which covers symbiosis, cross-breeding, as well as human intervention in species. These issues are woven into the backstory of Dawood's environment where rising sea levels and calcification of the oceans have led to new hybrid species and new social hierarchies.

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Leviathan Legacy Trilogy forms part of Dawood's larger *Leviathan* universe, looking at human and marine ecologies, which launched at the Venice Biennale last year. *Leviathan* will manifest as a 10-part film, a VR trilogy, paintings, sculptures, neons and an extensive public programme across multiple international institutions, with the remaining chapters of the 10-part film and VR trilogy due for completion by 2021.

Although seemingly science fiction, the narrative of the *Leviathan Legacy Trilogy* is informed by ongoing dialogues between Dawood and the Marine Institute at Plymouth University, the leading marine centre in the UK.

This new VR work has been developed with two possible language versions (English and Mandarin), with two very different actors and personalities (one a brash New Yorker, and the other, a more demure woman from Shanghai) as a means of conveying parallel narrative possibilities.

Leviathan Legacy: part 1 is juxtaposed with Dawood's new painting series entitled: *Disposable Mementoes*, which have neon elements integrated within their surface. These look critically but playfully at the impact of human tourism on coastal regions.

Leviathan Legacy Trilogy has been supported by Plymouth Arts Centre, The Marine Institute at Plymouth University, DSL Collection and the University of Westminster's Institute of Advanced Studies. With thanks to CreativeXR programme support and Karen Smith and Tong Hai at OCAT Xi'an for translation support. The programme has been developed by Digital Catapult and Arts Council England, with support from Innovate UK.

Notes to Editors

Shezad Dawood works across film, painting, neon, sculpture and most recently virtual reality to deconstruct systems of image, language, site and narrative. Using the editing process as a method to explore both meaning and form, across diverse media, his practice often involves collaboration and knowledge exchange. He often works with groups and individuals to map far-reaching lines of enquiry across different geographic locations, disciplines and communities. His works are particularly concerned with acts of translation and restaging.

Dawood's work has been exhibited internationally, including the Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2018), Lahore Biennale, Pakistan (2018), Si Shang Art Museum, Beijing (2017); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2016); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015); Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2014); Marrakech Biennial, Morocco (2014); MACBA, Barcelona (2014); Witte de With, Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2013); Busan Biennale, South Korea (2010); Tate Britain, London (2009); and the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy (2009).

Most recently, Dawood has held solo exhibitions at MOSTYN, Wales (2018); the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, USA (2018); Palazzina Canonica and Fortuny Factory Venice, Italy (2017-18); Timothy Taylor, London (2016); Pioneer Works, New York (2015); Parasol Unit, London (2014); OCAT Xi'an, China (2014) and Modern Art Oxford (2012).

Shezad Dawood was born in London in 1974 and trained at Central St Martin's and the Royal College of Art before undertaking a PhD at Leeds Metropolitan University. Dawood is a Research Fellow in Experimental Media at the University of Westminster. He lives and works in London.