

Mishaal Atheer

Mishaal Atheer is an Iraqi American sculptor and visual artist based in the California Bay Area. Working primarily in bronze and drawing, he explores human connection, memory, displacement, and belonging. His abstract figurative practice brings the influence of ancient Mesopotamian art into dialogue with his lived experiences in Iraq and the United States. His work also extends to ceramics, offering another means of exploring form and texture.

Born in Basra, Iraq, in 1978, Atheer earned a diploma in sculpture from the Art Institute in Basra and a bachelor's degree in Sculpture/Fine Arts from the University of Baghdad. His early career included antiquities reconstruction, teaching sculpture at the Art Institute in Baghdad, and co-founding a studio that produced public art commissions for private collectors and municipalities.

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Atheer endured years of violent conflict, repeated threats to his life, and the loss of personal and artistic freedom. In 2007, he was forced to flee Iraq to save his life, seeking refuge in Amman, Jordan. There, he began rebuilding his life and artistic practice, presenting the solo exhibition *Sculpture Codes and its Continuance* at Foresight Gallery. These experiences of survival and displacement continue to inform his exploration of memory, vulnerability, and belonging.

Since settling in the California Bay Area in 2010, Atheer has continued to develop his practice, earning a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco in 2018. His encounters with California's landscapes, architecture, and diverse communities have expanded his visual language and brought new perspectives to his longstanding exploration of the relationship between people and place.

Drawing holds a central place in Atheer's practice alongside bronze sculpture. Through line, shadow, and layered forms, he explores the human figure within imagined and remembered environments. Bodies merge with hills, rocks, and architectural structures, suggesting how people carry the places and experiences that shape them. His drawings and sculptures sustain an ongoing dialogue between the intimacy of marks on paper and the physical presence of bronze.

Atheer has created more than one hundred bronze sculptures. Across his work, couples, families, and gathered figures express tenderness, resilience, and the enduring human need for connection. His forthcoming solo exhibition, *The Burdens of Memory*, at the Triton Museum of Art brings together his bronze sculptures and drawings, presenting complementary expressions of memory, displacement, and belonging.