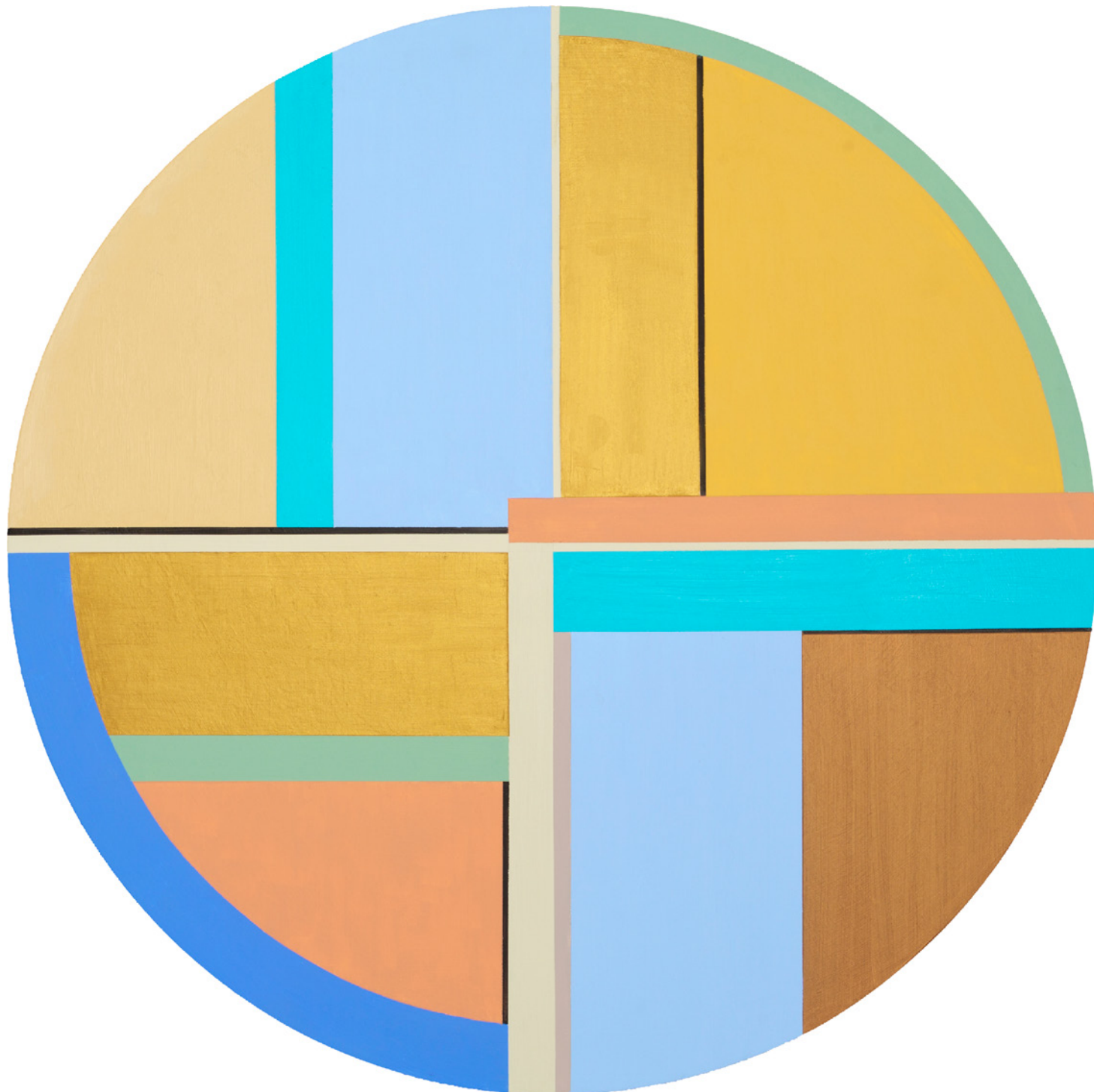


RALPH JOACHIM

Terra Firma #4, 2017
Acrylic on board, 24 in diameter



COURTESY THE ARTIST

KADHIM KHANJAR

We Iraqis

see the tattooed arms of American soldiers emerge
from helicopters
to throw pamphlets onto our rooftop-sleeping women.
We Iraqis
eat sectarianism every morning
on cracked breakfast plates placed there by our mothers.
We Iraqis
make our doors from iron
so we can rust behind them.
We Iraqis
fire bullets when one of us dies
and accidentally kill our own.
We Iraqis
fight over roosters
and wipe out our blood.
We Iraqis
don't flinch when checkpoint dogs rub
their snouts against our closed eyes.
We Iraqis
plant graveyards
next to our houses.
We Iraqis
run laps
around humanitarian aid trailers.
We Iraqis
rub shoulders
as we lift narrow coffins.
We Iraqis
count the dead with the same fingers
that collected bullet casings in our childhoods.
We Iraqis

don't remove skulls off public park fences
even after they've dried.
We Iraqis
use soap to wash our hands before we eat food
and use the same soap to cleanse them of blood.
We Iraqis
extract our decayed years everyday
and stand in line at mass graves.
We Iraqis
wait for buses under summer hot concrete blast walls
like soaked shoes.
We Iraqis
use guns for pillows
and explosives paste for blankets.
We Iraqis
are worms crawling the pomegranates
of the world.

—translated from Arabic by Abbas Kadhim and David Allen Sullivan

Kadhim Khanjar is a modern poet from Iraq. He is part of a ten-poet collective from Babil province who recently recited their poetry in a field full of unexploded mines. This collective of poets from the center of Iraq, has conducted a series of performances based on the theme of the violence that is destroying their homeland. During these performances, they literally flirt with death.

Dr. Abbas Kadhim is an Iraqi-American academic who specializes in Iraq, Iran, Persian Gulf, and Islam. He is a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute, SAIS-Johns Hopkins University, and the president of the Institute of Shia Studies in Washington, D.C. He is the author of *Reclaiming Iraq: the 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, Univ. of Texas Press, 2012; and "The Hawza under Siege: A Study in the Ba'th Party Archives", Boston Univ., 2013.

David Allen Sullivan's books include: *Strong-Armed Angels, Every Seed of the Pomegranate*, a book of co-translations from the Arabic of Iraqi Adnan Al-Sayegh undertaken with Abbas Kadhim, *Bombs Have Not Breakfasted Yet*, and *Black Ice*, about his father's dementia and death. Most recently, he won the Mary Ballard Chapbook poetry prize for *Take Wing*. He teaches at Cabrillo College, where he edits the *Porter Gulch Review* with his students, and lives in Santa Cruz with his family. <http://davidallensullivan.weebly.com/index.html>