

## RACHEL KHEDOORI

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[THE BOX](#)

by annie buckley



LOS ANGELES “Warfare is a great matter to a nation; it is the ground of death and of life; it is the way of survival and destruction, and must be examined.” Thus begins *The Art of War*, written by Sun Tzu more than 2,500 years ago. The words and spirit of this epic treatise, as ethically aware as it is tactically wise, could serve to introduce Rachel Khedoori’s *Untitled (Iraq Book Project)*, 2009, the Australian artist’s first solo show in Los Angeles, where she has lived since 1990. This metaphorically (and literally) weighty work consists of 66 large, hardbound books, which in this exhibition lay open on nine wooden tables with attached benches. Inside the books are running lines of continuous text, printed in a single font and with no line breaks, taken from news articles published about the Iraq War since its inception in 2003. The ongoing project has no set end date and further involves the continuing compilation of new articles into additional books.

Despite the flood of words, culled from geographically and ideologically disparate sources, what is most striking about this work is the silence it engenders in visitors. This is enhanced by the spare esthetic—gray books, white pages and bare wooden tables—which represents a departure from Khedoori’s sumptuous and often organically shaped sculptures and installations; here there are no soft edges on which to rest, no curvaceous corridors in which to hide, only the ongoing progression of sentences across pages. The benches indicate that the artist intends for viewers to sit and read and examine this conflict in all its minute and excruciating detail. Each of the non-English language items, whether from the *Kenyan Daily Nation*, a transcript from the Iraqi Satellite Channel or the Baltic News Service, has been translated into English, not—as a harsh assessment might support—to assert the authority of a Western point of view, but rather to make accessible multiple and opposing viewpoints from around the world.

In a smaller space downstairs was *cave model* (2009), a plaster of paris sculpture stretching to about 6 feet in each dimension. Those familiar with Khedoori’s work will recognize the sinuous curves of the white sculpture, snaking around itself like a caduceus. According to press materials, it represents the form of an imagined cave. In the context of this exhibition, the work accrued added meaning. Its open spaces provided breathing room to reflect on the nearly incomprehensible march of information on the floor above.

*Photo: View of Rachel Khedoori's installation Untitled (Iraq Book Project), 2009, 66 books, 9 wooden tables, computer and worker; at the Box.*

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