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You Get Me? Mahtab Hussain

12 January to 24 March 2018

'What does it mean to be a British Muslim male today?' This was the question Mahtab Hussain asked himself, when he began making portraits of young working-class British Asian men and boys.

Over a nine-year period Hussain photographed in Birmingham, where he grew up, stopping young men in the street and chatting to them as he took their portrait. He later expanded the project to London and Nottingham.

The men depicted in his portraits identify as Muslim, and expressed to Hussain their frustration with the negative way that young Muslim men are presented in the media. Hussain says, 'The people I photographed face unemployment, discrimination, and racism. Yet, they identify with Britain and have a strong sense of Britishness'.

The title of the exhibition is a phrase that Hussain repeatedly heard when talking with the young men. 'You get me?' is an expression that can sometimes be used in an aggressive way, but also expresses vulnerability and uncertainty: Do you understand me? Do you know where I'm coming from?

The portraits, presented with quotes in the voices of the young men themselves, tell a unique story of boyhood and manhood. Hussain says, 'I didn't want to make portraits that made you feel sorry for these young men. I wanted to show that despite pressures, they have still found a way to hold themselves up as proud and dignified, although with complex and often conflicting identities'.

The curator of the exhibition, Mark Sealy at Autograph ABP, says '*You Get Me?* explores race and representation, respect and cultural difference. Mahtab Hussain's work is a timely investigation into the current debates on migration and identity.'

To find out more, read our exhibition guide, browse the reading area, or come along to Mahtab Hussain's Artist Talk on Saturday 3 March. The event is free, everyone is welcome, and booking is recommended at our Welcome Desk.

An accompanying publication is available to buy from our bookshop for the special exhibition price of £25, RRP £30.

You Get Me? is curated by Mark Sealy at Autograph ABP. Supported using public funding by Arts Council England.



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