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SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

# 'GARDENS AND JUNGLES' BY TAGREED DARGHOOTH AT TABARI ART SPACE DUBAI

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Tagreed Darghouth Ares, 2023 Acrylic on Canvas 180 x 140 cm

Tabari Artspace introduces “Gardens and Jungles,” the solo exhibition by Lebanese painter Tagreed Darghouth.

In this showcase, the female artist, Tagreed Darghouth, presents a compelling body of work in response to the increasing militarisation of our civil society. Drawing inspiration from Stephen Graham’s theories on warfare, political violence, and how military and security visions are reshaping our cities, Darghouth offers a thought-provoking artistic commentary. Building on her previous explorations of state surveillance and the profound impacts of war on everyday existence, influenced by her personal encounters in Beirut, Lebanon, this series delves even deeper into these critical themes.



Tagreed Darghouth From the series “Gardens and Jungles” 22, 2023 Acrylic on Camo Printed Paper 59 x 43 cm

The exhibition’s title draws from the controversial statements of Josep Borrell, the outspoken foreign policy chief of the European Union. Borrell portrayed Europe as a utopian “garden” of affluence, contrasting it with the rest of the world, which he labelled a “jungle.” Darghouth challenges this outdated binary perspective, suggesting that the traditional notion of developed versus developing nations has lost its relevance. Instead, she contends that new divisions, barriers, borders, and partitions have emerged, shaping a world that is neither safer nor more appealing than before.

Through a collection of acrylic paintings on canvas, ranging from smaller 29 x 21 cm pieces to larger 3 x 3 m artworks, Darghouth seeks to defy this new global order. Her paintings employ expressive layers of impasto, depicting landscapes, flowers, trees, and birds, some set against a backdrop of camouflaged fabric or paper. By juxtaposing nature with camouflage, Darghouth engages in a process of deconstruction and rebirth, symbolising the enduring resilience of the natural world. In certain works, she incorporates symbols like Ares, the Greek God of War, military helicopters, tanks, and toy soldiers, alluding to the performative masculinity and gamification often associated with conflict.

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We asked Tagreed a few questions about her exhibition:

**Selections:** Your exhibition responds to the increasing militarisation of civil society. Can you share more about how your personal experiences in Beirut have influenced your exploration of these themes and the message you aim to convey through your artwork

**Tagreed Darghouth:** “Relocating to post-war Beirut in the late 1990s to embark on my art studies at the Lebanese University of Fine Arts exposed me to a multicultural milieu, one that remains deeply engaged with political and social matters. Beirut is a small city of huge contrasts – its striking dichotomies, palpable diversity, and unresolved conflicts have fuelled my art over the years. Beirut’s vibrant but tumultuous environment undeniably played a pivotal role in moulding both my artistic sensibilities and my political consciousness profoundly influencing the thematic contours of my work.

In the words of Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright and poet, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

Personally, I adhere to the conviction that art stands as the most intellectually resonant and visually compelling medium through which to articulate ideas and provoke contemplation. In creating my artworks, my aspiration is for the audience to sense the “hammer” within them and hear the defying voice behind my proposed aesthetic language.”

**Selections:** The title of your exhibition challenges the binary perspective of a developed “garden” versus a developing “jungle.” How do your artworks challenge this perspective, and what message do you hope viewers will take away regarding the evolving global divisions that you highlight in your paintings?

**Tagreed Darghouth:** “The act of creating art, in my view, challenges the simplistic binary dichotomy between a cultivated “garden” and an untamed “jungle” in a developed society. This exhibition not only probes this binary perspective but also delves into the creation of fabricated conflicts and the manipulation of fear as tools of control.

As José Saramago, the Portuguese writer, once remarked, “Humanity’s capacity for intelligence, hope, compassion, and moral strength can defeat the forces of blindness in any given society”. It is my aspiration that my artistic expression, encapsulated in the thematic exploration of Gardens and Jungles, can serve as yet another endeavour to combat this prevailing blindness.”



Tagreed Darghouth The Tank Series 1, 2023 Acrylic on Wood 35 x 27 cm



Born in 1979, Tagreed Darghouth is a painter who employs abstract impressionism and rich impasto layers, applied with dynamic brushstrokes, to explore themes related to structural violence, pop culture, and marginalised communities. Her contemporary approach draws inspiration from diverse sources, bridging gaps between various artistic genres. Darghouth's influences encompass renowned figures like Lucian Freud and Georg Baselitz, as well as masters such as Rembrandt Van Rijn and Gustave Courbet, and modernists like Chaim Soutine and Willem De Kooning. Her artistic journey also reflects upon philosophy, music, literature, and subaltern histories, creating connections across cultures and time periods.

Location: Tabari Artspace, DIFC, Dubai

Dates: September 1- 30, 2023

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JULY, 2024



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