

## Gardens and Jungles

Tagreed Darghouth 12 September - 18 November 2023

For this highly anticipated solo exhibition, powerful female painter, Tagreed Darghouth has produced a body of work that responds to the militarisation of civil society. Inspired by Stephen Graham's ideas on warfare, political violence, and the transformation of cities by military and security imaginaries, Darghouth presents a thought-provoking body of work building upon her previous investigations into state surveillance and the profound effects of war on everyday life influenced by her personal experiences in Beirut, Lebanon.

The title of the exhibition draws from the controversial remarks made by Josep Borrell, the outspoken foreign policy chief of the European Union. Borrell described Europe as an idyllic "garden" of prosperity, juxtaposing it with the rest of the world, which he referred to as a "jungle." Darghouth challenges this outdated binary perception, suggesting that the traditional understanding of developed and developing nations has lost its relevance. Instead, she argues that new partitions, walls, borders, and divisions have emerged, creating a world that is neither safer nor more appealing than before.

Through a collection of acrylic paintings on canvas, ranging in size from smaller 29 x 21cm pieces to larger 3 x 3m works, Darghouth seeks to defy this new world order. Her paintings employ gestural impasto layers and depict landscapes, flowers, trees, and birds, all painted atop a camouflaged print on fabric or paper. By juxtaposing nature with camouflage, Darghouth engages in a process of deconstruction and resurrection, symbolising the resilience of the natural world. In some of her works, she incorporates icons like Ares, the Greek God of War, military helicopters, tanks, and toy soldiers, hinting at the performative masculinity and gamification associated with conflict.

Reflecting on her art as an act of resistance, Darghouth says:

*"This exhibition celebrates humanity's brightest achievement - the creation of art - in the face of*



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*militarism and separatist cultures.”*

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