

**ART**



EXHIBITION

# Toys and Trophies: From Zeus' Pandora to Barbie Doll, Tagreed Darghouth solo

20 Oct 2020 - 2 Jan 2021

Regular hours

Tuesday	10:00 - 18:00
Wednesday	10:00 - 18:00
Thursday	10:00 - 18:00
Friday	10:00 - 18:00
Saturday	10:00 - 18:00
Sunday	10:00 - 18:00
Monday	10:00 - 18:00

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## About

For our forthcoming exhibition, *Toys and Trophies: From Zeus' Pandora to Barbie Doll* Lebanese painter, Tagreed Darghouth has produced a fresh body of work that began eight months ago and came to completion during the aftermath of the explosion, in Beirut's port - her studio, located in Mar Mykel, was completely destroyed. This exhibition, then, comes at a moment of heightened pain and need that flows from Lebanon and cries out through Dargouth's art. As a gallery that has always worked with and propelled Middle Eastern artists, representing several from Lebanon, the recent trauma that ensued from the explosion has shaken and saddened our community and team. We aim to use our platform to support and show solidarity wherever possible, as such, 10% of proceeds from the sales of works included in this exhibition will be donated to the Lebanese Red Cross. The selected works aim to probe the socially constructed reality of feminine beauty and its relation to the male gaze in contemporary, neoliberal society. Working with acrylic on canvas the artist continues her unabashed social commentary, reflecting upon what she encounters on the streets of Beirut and beyond in the cybersphere where international mass media and social media platforms continue to shape and reinforce limiting and dominant visions of gender.

Darghouth, who regularly connects far-flung influences from literature, philosophy and music to her personal experiences in the modern world now turns to Greek mythology as her point of departure. Pandora was the fabled first woman to be constructed in ancient Greek society and unleashed with unrivalled physical beauty and immense sexual allure. The artist, probes the fabricated nature and superficiality of Pandora, a woman over whom Aphrodite 'spilled grace' and whose destiny was to become "an evil men will love to embrace". Conflating the classical with the contemporary throughout this body of work; Pandora, Darghouth reasons, is a myth but so too is the Barbie doll. Barbie's plastic physique has become a modern icon associated with pre-packaged western gender expectations and superficiality. The selected works see Darghouth's paintbrush activate and amplify the constructed nature of human fictions and the fetishised status of femininity. Skulls, which have featured regularly in the artist's output since 2010, are included here refer back to her preoccupation with the notion of 'Memento mori' and feel all the more poignant now given the backdrop and context of this exhibition. Darghouth also interrogates the frail and fair frame of the Barbie doll, the unquestioned and iconised beauty of Venus and Aphrodite, glossed lips, the human torso and mannequin dummies which exist to be draped. Through prominent, layered brushstrokes and swift flicks of the wrist the artist engages in her own form of seduction as she pushes the viewer to consider her subjects anew.

## On Toys and Trophies: From Zeus' Pandora to Barbie Doll, Tagreed

Darghouth Says: “The thin and fair doll became a cultural icon in America and around the world. Selling over 58 million pieces per year, the plastic silhouette became both women’s ultimate ambition and men’s trophy fantasy. Aided by mass media, product slogans, gender stereotypes, female objectification, plastic surgery and social media photo filters the “Pandora’s box” of capitalism released, with the Barbie Doll, its unattainable standards of beauty and perfection. Those standards have since become central to women’s identity and men’s status. In other words it “spilled grace” over a doll’s head to become the toy all little girls want to have, the body all women desire to achieve, and the fantasy all men love to embrace.”