



DARVISH



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TRAVELING LIGHT

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BY DARVISH FAKHR

"Finding a way to live together without violence or hostility will require a kind of creativity and invention."

— EDWARD SAID, 1978

Describing my work and practice does not come easily to me. I am after a certain feeling that I have never been able to describe in words, which is why I resort to the visual language through paint and movement. It's more of a sensual world, than a logical one.

I am heavily influenced by Sufism. I call myself a "Sufi Skool Drop Out" because my path is not pure and formal like those of dedicated Sufis. I seek a lightness of being which I equate to being at the top of a jump just before the descent where for a brief moment there is weightlessness.

This feeling of lightness is one which we all know but cannot always access, its that of an unencumbered flexible mind that evokes joy and ease. Access to this mindstate can only be done through the present moment. I search out these moments throughout my life and create portals for me to travel through creatively. These portals split the moment like an atom and time becomes limitless and elastic.

Movement offer me these inroads, but so do paintings. I layer the paintings by continuing to paint on top of older work then stripping back to reveal previous strata of color and form. I am fascinated by the palimpsest of walls, and the multi layering of cultures on top of each other.

Growing up in America as a half Iranian during the revolution was fraught with shame and abuse that I didn't understand. I believe I became an artist as a way of processing these complicated emotions, but also to celebrate my differences...to show the beauty of overlapping cultures (even those that are politically opposed). This need has permeated all aspects of my life. Whether it is fashion, or dance, I allow for all my influences to be legible the way that my paintings show their previous incarnations.

My paintings are also an amalgamation of cultures. Growing up in Boston I was taught a very traditional Western technique of oil painting. By superimposing Eastern philosophies (usually Sufi but not always) through text in both English and Farsi I aim at celebrating the juxtaposition as a creative solution to an ongoing worldly conflict.



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Photo by Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

SUFI VANDALISM



Only Pieces
2022
198 x 198 cm
Oil on Linen



In Between
2022
92 x 92 cm
Oil on Linen



Ghajar Love
2022
113 x 24 cm
Oil on Linen



Nisha
2022
221 x 198 cm
Oil on Linen



Shooter
2022
60 x 80 cm each
Oil on Boards



Winston
2022
183 x 152 cm
Oil on Linen



Touching The Sky
2022
210 x 150 cm
Oil on Linen



Stay Up
2022
198 x 281 cm
Oil on Linen



You Don't Have To Carry It All
2022
150 x 205 cm
Oil on Linen



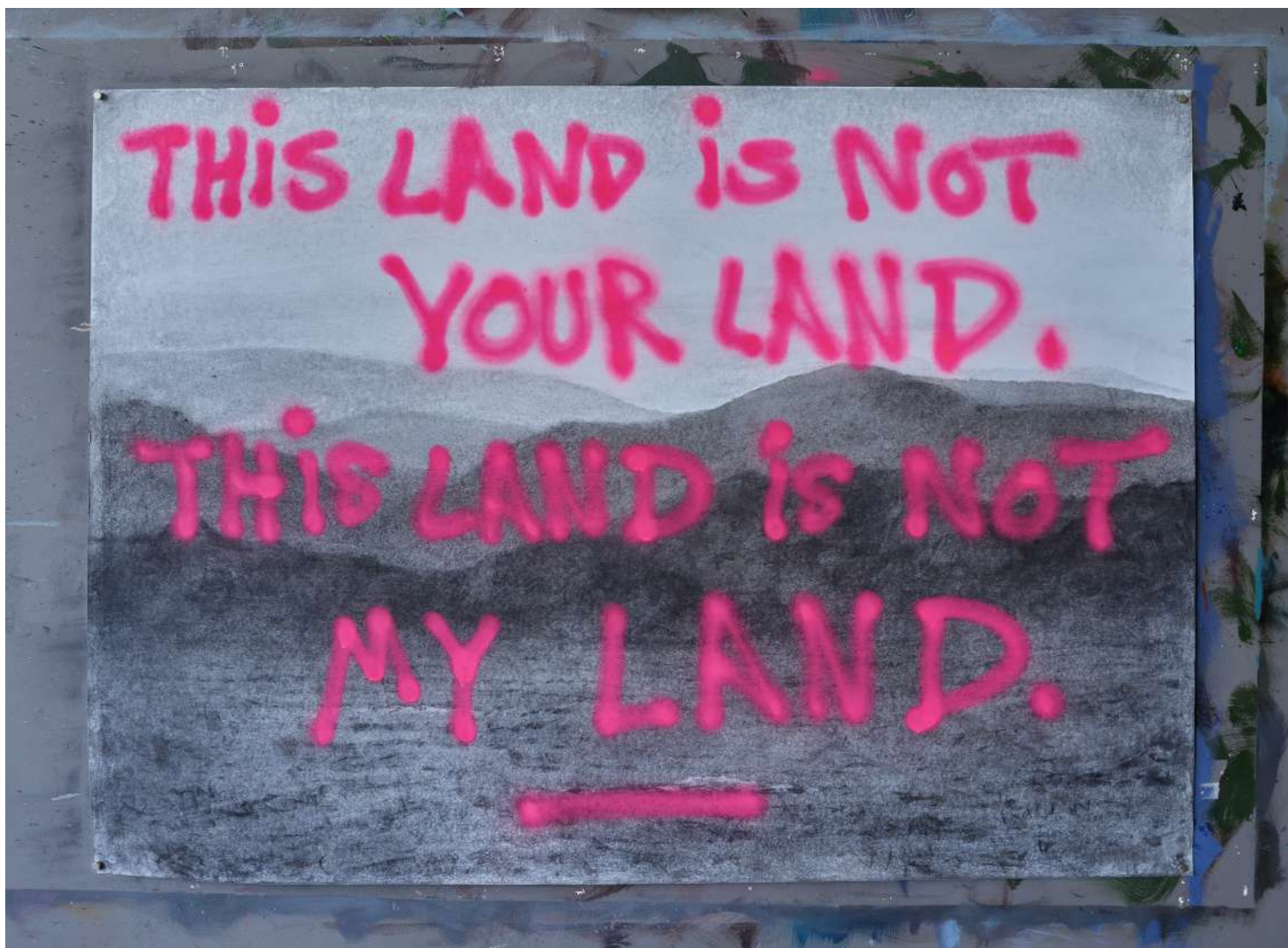
Desert Escort
2022
140 x 220 cm
Oil on Linen



In Love With The World
2022
198 x 198 cm



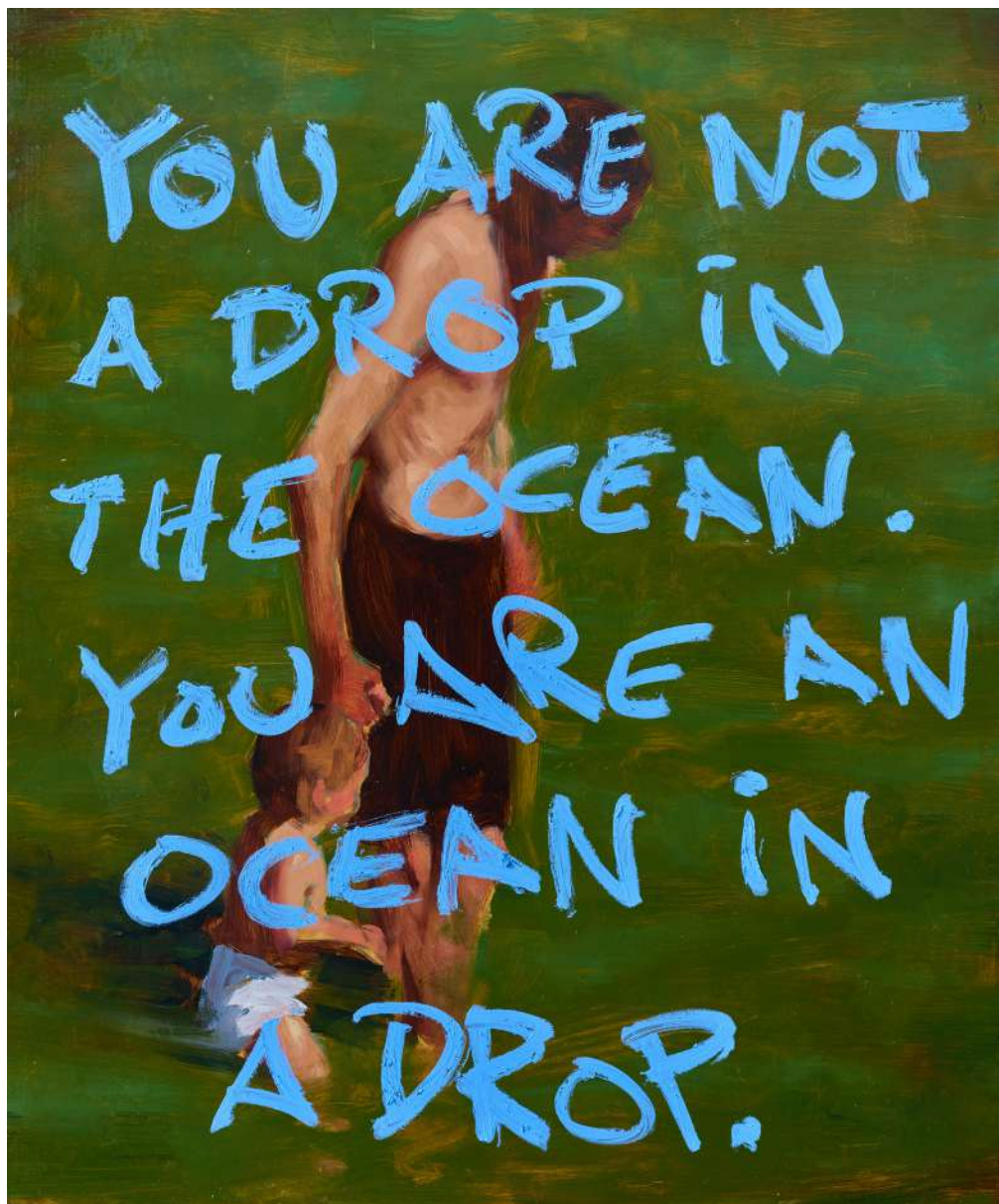
Kempton Flats
2022
92 x 92 cm



Not Your Land
2021
100 x 140 cm
Charcoal on Paper



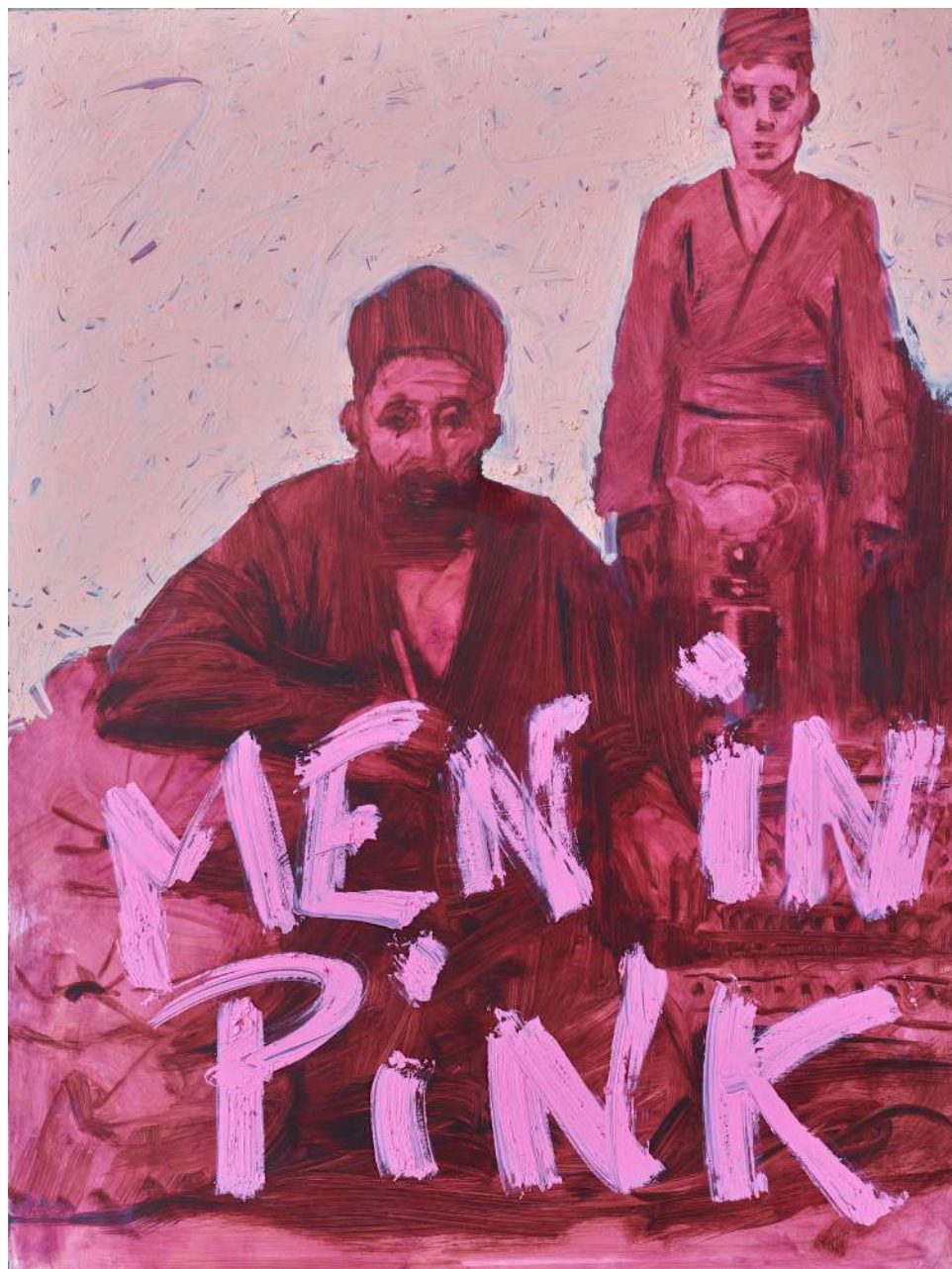
Devils Dyke
2021
40 x 60 cm
Oil on Board



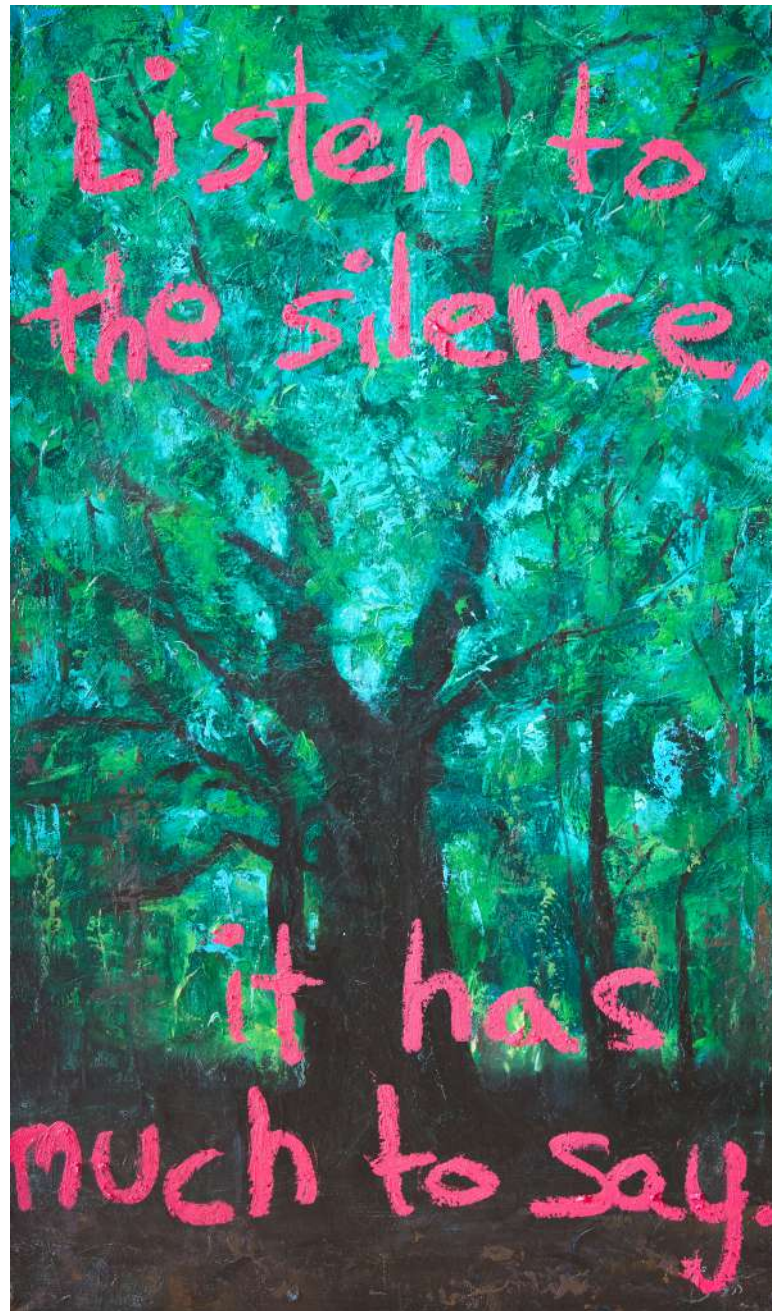
Drop In The Ocean
2022
70 x 50 cm
Oil on Board



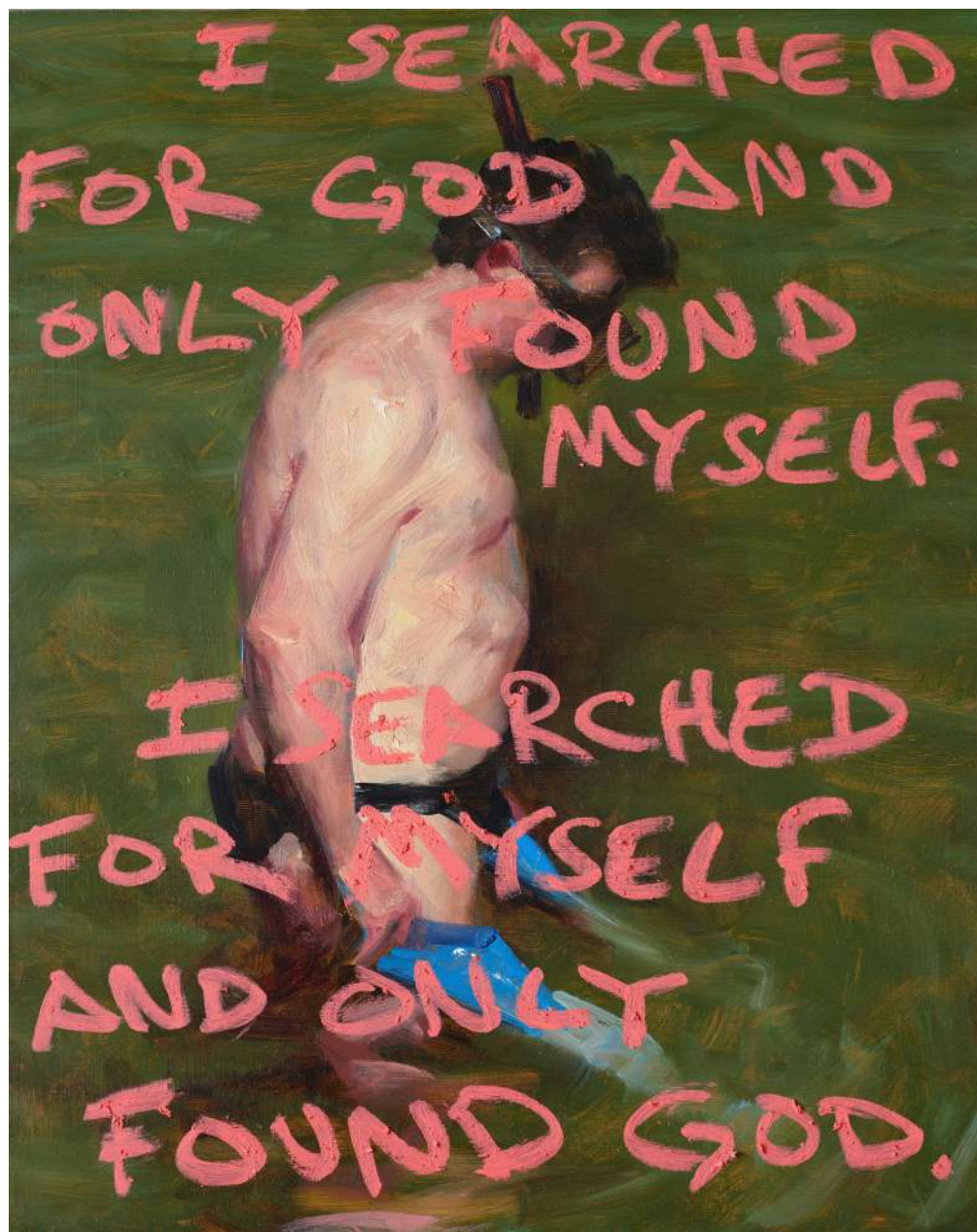
Cool To Be Kind
2021
80 x 60 cm
Oil on Board



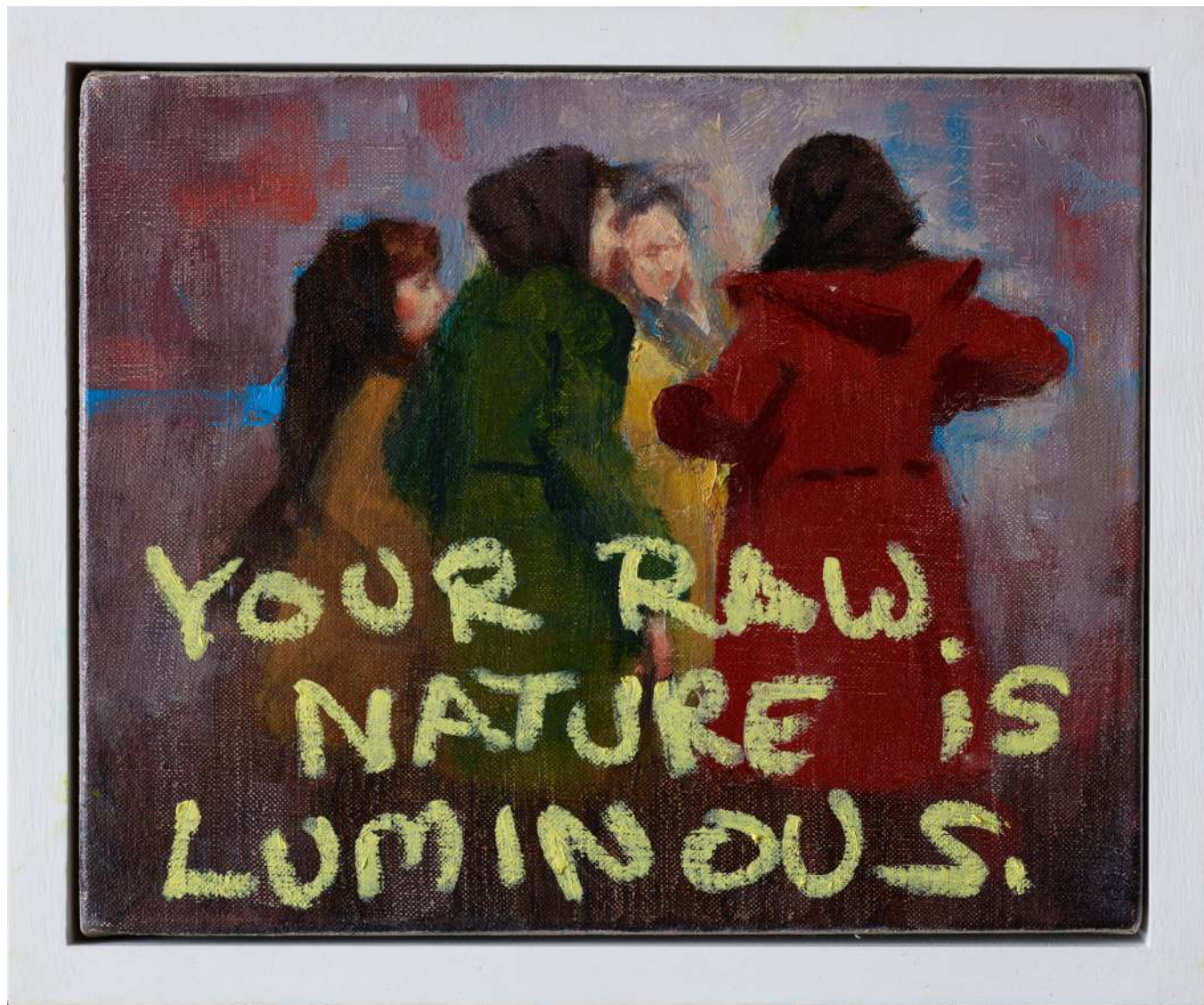
Men In Pink
2021
80 x 60 cm
Oil on Board



Listen To The Silence
2022
88 x 53 cm
Oil on Linen



Finding Myself
2022
60 x 40 cm
Oil on Board



Raw Nature
2021
15 x 25 cm
Oil on Canvas

MOVEMENT

In what he calls “gentle civic disruptions,” Darvish channels his influences and inspirations from Sufism to challenge our preconceived notions of culture and tolerance in performance work that strikes viewers and passersby with its surrealism, humor, and optimism. Though he is not a practicing Sufi, his work is meant to pay homage to the purity of Sufi mysticism. The guerrilla nature of such work is meant to disrupt the daily movement of our lives.

These photos are from an ongoing collaboration, entitled “Lightness of Being,” with photographer Hugh Fox.



Leap from Window
2022
37 x 42 cm
Defaced Photograph
Photo by Hugh Fox



Released
2022
140 x 90 cm
Defaced Photograph
Photo by Hugh Fox



Lifted
2022
140 x 90 cm
Defaced Photograph
Photo by Hugh Fox

Liminal Crevasses

By Mariepet Mangosing

Darvish is living his own genre - playing on the practices of Sufism and implementing its principles of seeking light in even the darkest corners, no matter how difficult it might be to approach and access. Sticking to the mystic side of Sufism, he leans into the neo-traditional ways of doing things. There's an err of spirituality in his movements but its intention is really to disrupt the status quo, to hopefully incite a pivot of perspective. Darvish paints a beautiful portrait but then writes a proverb on top, a willful subversion of what people might expect from a painting. In the same way, Darvish will move his body through high trafficked areas, giving a statement about the illusion of spectacle. It is this practice that is at the helm of Darvish's work—it aims to please but not without making you consider the bigger context.

In one of his paintings that features an Osho quote—*"Let it all go. See what stays."*—Darvish doubles down on his philosophy that freedom is accepting two truths can exist at once. He recounts the inspiration for the piece sharing, "My uncle in Isfahan once reminded me that we are all on a rock flying through space over 1000mph, so there is really no need to hold onto things so tightly. This reminder was a profound moment in my life, after which notions of 'letting go' and 'flying high' became a big part of my outlook."

Growing up in America as a half-Iranian, there's a certain dissonance that comes with experiencing life between these states. Hometown geography aside, Darvish alludes to the idea that home is in a moment rather than a place. Perhaps, this can be due to the confusion that toggles amongst these cultural identities, especially during a time of fraught conflict that might leave one feeling rather helpless. Darvish decidedly wants freedom for Iran and uses his creativity to advocate and pose a call to action for human rights. Darvish's body of work (both painting and movement art) is essentially about looking at our boundaries to find harmony. At a time when conflict and divisiveness is a constant battle, Darvish and his work can be looked at as a self-check, warning us of our egos and the walls that create the dissonance that impedes good feelings of contentment and peace.

By deepening an understanding of what comes out of the liminal crevasses of our collective consciousness, Darvish excavates the room needed to be unobstructed by the sobering and darker sides of existence. At a time when it feels easiest to try and quell our anxieties and fear with even more control, Darvish continues to be about one thing and one thing only; "I want to create work that is an island away from chaos. It may be unpredictable but ultimately it is a place of calm."

DARVISH FAKHR

BIOGRAPHY

Darvish Fakhr is a half-Iranian, half-American artist whose work ranges from painting to movement art. In his practice, he amalgamates disparate cultures by overlaying various concepts and aesthetics through interference, which can take the form of movement, paint, or text. Throughout all his work, he fuses Western techniques with Eastern philosophies, such as incorporating Persian poetry into oil paintings or converting a skateboard into a flying carpet.

He calls his movement art “gentle civic disruptions,” inspired by the practice and image of the whirling dervish. In these works, much like the interference found in his paintings, he cross-pollinates aspects of his Iranian heritage with his Western upbringing. He challenges preconceptions by mocking stereotypes through humor and invention and uses lightness and concepts of flying as metaphors for accessing ideas of freedom.

He has exhibited and performed internationally, included at The Armory Show in New York, and is in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London, for his depiction of Akram Khan. He currently lives and works in Brighton, UK.

EDUCATION

- 1997 M.F.A. Slade School of Fine Art, London
- 1994 B.F.A. Museum School of Fine Arts, Boston

EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 "From Tehran with Love" group show with Magic of Persia, Los Angeles
- 2018 "No Man's Land" solo show at Asia House in collaboration with Akram Khan, London
- 2015 The Armory Show, selected as "most photographed and hardest to miss" by Voice of America, New York
- 2014 "Palimpsest" Edge of Arabia, New York
- 2013 "Farce" Aun Gallery, London
- 2011 "Safar" Aun Gallery, Tehran
- 2007 "Embodiment" group show at Signal Gallery, Hoxton
- 2005 BP Travel Award Show, London and Aberdeen
- 2004 National Portrait Gallery, London and Edinburgh
- 2003 Mall Galleries, Quoad Art Gallery, Brighton
- 2003 Royal Society of Portrait Painters, London
- 2002 Chelsea Art Fair
- 2001 Medici Gallery, Piccadilly, London
- 2001 "Discerning Eye" at Mall Galleries, London
- 1998 Exhibition of portraits at Blue Gallery, Chelsea
- 1997 Degree Show, Slade School of Fine Art
- 1993 Annual Boit Competition, Museum School, Boston

COLLECTIONS

National Portrait Gallery - Permanent Collection

AWARDS

- 2007 BP Award, National Portrait Gallery, London
- 2006 BP Award, National Portrait Gallery, London and Edinburgh
- 2001 Royal West of England Academy, 3rd Place, Bristol
- 2000 BP Award, National Portrait Gallery, London and Aberdeen
- 1999 BP Award, National Portrait Gallery, London and Aberdeen
- 1998 BP Award, National Portrait Gallery, London and Aberdeen
- 1993 Annual Boit Competition, Museum School, Boston

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Back Cover Image: *In Love With The World, 2022*

LEILA HELLER GALLERY
I-87, Alserkal Avenue, PO Box 413991, Al Quoz 1
Dubai, UAE
www.Leilahellergallery.com

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