

LEILA HELLER.



Darvish, Past Right and Wrong, 2023, 40 x 60 cm, Oil on linen

Leila Heller Gallery presents Darvish Fakhri's first New York solo exhibition featuring new paintings and live performances.

Leila Heller Gallery is proud to present the first New York solo exhibition by London based artist Darvish Fakhri. The show, titled "Every Story is Us", will be on view at 17 East 76th Street, New York City, from October 17th to November 30th. The exhibition will feature new paintings and will be accompanied by several performances in the gallery and around the city.

Darvish Fakhri is a half-Iranian, half-American artist whose work ranges from meticulous oil painting to expressive 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. Darvish's work straddles the line between beauty and destruction. Known for his classical style and meticulous technique, his precise paintings are then desecrated by his alterego, The Urban Sufi.

"Every Story is Us" explores the feeling of freedom found within the present moment. In a world marked by ceaseless transformation, the tales we cherish today evolve when we recall them tomorrow. Within this ever-shifting narrative landscape, layers of significance coalesce and fracture, unveiling a palimpsest of fluid messages. Fakhri's works take shape through the convergence of Western-style painting techniques, steeped in control and mastery, and the translated verses of Eastern mysticism, drawn from Sufi wisdom. This fusion of cultures forms the cornerstone of both his creative process and his way of life. The work invites the viewer to reflect on these intersections.

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Darvish's tongue-in-cheek humor grinds against robust otherworldliness and political critique in his ritualistic live performances. The artist pushes his work into a spiritual direction by writing Eastern inspired poetry over finished oil paintings. This uncomfortable act of artistic expression aims to merge notions of the spiritual and the physical as well as the divine and the mortal. On the subject, he writes:

"There is a moment, very briefly, at the top of any jump where everything becomes still and weightless. Through paint and movement I try to express the particular quality of that moment."

In what he calls "gentle civic disruptions," Darvish challenges our preconceived notions of culture and tolerance in performance work that strikes viewers with its surrealism, humor, and optimism. The guerrilla nature of such work is meant to disrupt the familiar rhythms of daily existence by proposing alternative approaches to tempo, physicality, and conduct. Employing spontaneous intervention as a creative medium, Darvish aims to echo the profound essence of the present moment. Through the dual channels of oil painting and movement, he cultivates ongoing transformations within his creations, willingly surrendering to the chaos of the unknown.

Most recently, Darvish exhibited "Traveling Light" at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai. In this body of work Darvish continues his lifelong exploration of the tension between art as object, and art as action, using damage and destruction to create new forms of meaning. Darvish began using text in his painting in 2013, during his show 'Farce' at Aun Gallery in Tehran. Farce is a play on the word Fars which was the original name of Iran and where the word 'Farsi' originates. The images in this series are odd juxtapositions of the daily lives of Iranian living with the constant threat of war and unrest.

Darvish Fakhr currently lives and works in Brighton, UK. He has exhibited and performed internationally, including at The Armory Show in New York. He is in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London. Darvish graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London with an MFA in 1997 where he studied with Paula Rego.

### ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

Press Inquiries: For more information, images and prices, please contact [ella@leilaheller.com](mailto:ella@leilaheller.com)