

TAGREED  
DARGHOUTH

HE WHO GAZES AT THE SEA; THE MAN AND THE LAND



T A G R E E D  
D A R G H O U T H

H E W H O G A Z E S A T T H E S E A ; T H E M A N A N D T H E L A N D

## Where there are Lines there are Bones

*In the thickness of silence, a conversation.  
Where there are lines, there are bones.*

*In the silence of seeing, a looking back.  
In the violence of the world, a vision made of gesture,*

*a human body gesturing to the world,  
a spasming, a scattering, a silence.*

I begin in uncertainties, a sense that the exile before me is more material than intellectual, although the intellect is certainly at play. I begin with words.

### WORDS.

Do you know that words can stabilise, ground, but also take everything. Words here play with painting. Literary quotes chosen by the artist hang in the air, and I speak them out loud:

*I am the wound and the knife.*  
Flowers of Evil, Charles Baudelaire

This quote sits alongside Tagreed's paintings of the Beirut port explosion. Speak the words aloud a few times, forget the meaning, and remember for yourself the way that words reverberate in your body.

You are the wound and the knife.  
When they are inside you, the words no longer ground, no longer take.  
Quotes frame this exhibition, their expertise in description and distance shaking the emotional charge of images.

Another quote to read, to roll around your body:

*Existence was reduced to spasms.*  
Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu  
The 25th hour

Another:

*The movement of the foam from the sea day and night, and you continuously  
look at the foam yet not the sea, and this is a strange thing.*  
The Elephant and the blind men  
Jalal al-Din Rumi

One more;

*She was gazing into the distant place as if she saw me!*

Bassam Hajjar, *The Family Album, Followed by the Passerby in a Nocturnal Scene*  
by Edward Hopper

It is as if words can shape something from this mess of a world that in reality is shapeless, as Virgil wrote, perhaps made of spasm, made of movement. See how the words helped me there.

#### PAINTING.

Bold skeletal stripes almost scatter the surfaces. Each line is so short as to be always moving, nothing is solid, even the architectural subjects are composed from lines that are gesture alone. The body is remembered, the arm is present.



Untitled, 70x100cm, acrylic on canvas, 2024

The order of these paintings comes from outside of construction. Which is to say the images are not made from the order of perspective, but rather from the order of vision. Let us say emergence; thick, layered, skeletal.

In this spasming reality Tagreed's painting is a description of reality as movement, inherently formless despite given forms, shapes, even words.



Untitled, 60x90cm, acrylic on canvas, 2024

To discern the subject of this artists' paintings, one must allow the paint to take the eye. The subject emerges stubbornly from inside the paint, conversing with the problem of what even is a subject, a surface, knowing more clearly what is the paint. And yet, the subject is clear, does emerge strongly from gesture and thickness, emerges from the silence within. I suspect this is what silence looks like. Silence need not be at peace after all. The silence afterwards, the absence of noise.

As years pass between one event and another, the thickness of experience emerges and recedes, rises and falls. I will not speak of waves, but the voices and events follow each other on repeat.

The work of Tagreed is powerful in its absolute surface. The word I want to use after absolute is silence. I want to say that the work is powerful in its absolute silence.

#### WORDS.

As I speak the words that Tagreed has chosen, taken from books written in many times and places, the silence grows.

She speaks of ears, scattered. I think of scattered silence. Bones are silent.

Thickness. A thick silence.

If words could contain or express the feeling, the thickness might not be required. You see how uncertainty pervades my words. It is not writing that this work needs, it is an ability to feel into an abyss.

#### SEEING.

We could speak of politics, in fact how could we not. Thick, layered, skeletal.

But the words are coming and perhaps there is a way to accept them. Outside of the direct experience of Tagreed's work, there is, of course, a way to look objectively, to take a position, to critically assess.



*The Pigeons Rock*, 60x70cm, acrylic on canvas, 2024

This is an artist who has consistently shown an attention to the political realities of contemporary life, both in the region, and as a part of more global concerns.

Surveillance has been an important theme, from her 2015 exhibition 'Shall you see me better now' a series depicting portraits of CCTV cameras, to 'Vision machines', tackling the subject of drones. But as well as technology, the land has taken her attention, and in switching scale and emphasis, she shows the watched as well as the watcher, a subject perhaps felt most keenly in the series, 'The tree within, a Palestinian olive tree'.

This is an artist who steps back in order to see, and then moves closer. This movement finds an echo in the manner of her painting which take objects and experiences from our everyday world – objects and experiences that are not benign, but yet are accepted – concentrating on them until they cannot be overlooked. Her skies are filled with such anxious objects.

The work contains a silent violence, a judgement of selective vision.

There is a selective seeing that pervades our lives, a phenomenon so common we do not even notice what we are not seeing. Tagreed provides an additional silence to the silence of not-quite seeing, a space to draw out and amplify the insidious violence of the world. In her work we are confronted by the everyday that is less comfortable, the parts that we do not know how to see, how to really look back at.

In the work of Tagreed this selective seeing happens at the scale of her paintings. She asks, what does one allow oneself to see in the landscapes we call home, what do we gloss over, no longer notice, avoid. She calls us to examine the vision of return.

Such conflicts in seeing are echoed in the world of social media, a continual showreel of unspeakable violence interspersed with cats and lunch dates, life advice and selections 'just for you'. There is, for many of us, an internal war regarding what to see or not to see, and perhaps also an opportunity: from among the horror perhaps we can learn again how to look back at what is there, to join the anxious objects of Tagreed, to learn again how to see.

#### PAINTING.

There is something underneath and there is something on top and there is something in the middle. We are not speaking of background, foreground and middle ground, but literally a layer between layers, the most visible layer between others. There are flashes at the edges that are vision-like, neurological.

#### WORDS.

In the thickness of silence, a conversation.

Where there are lines, there are bones.

In the silence of seeing, a looking back.

In the violence of the world, a vision made of gesture,

a human body gesturing to the world,

a spasming, a scattering, a silence.

Amy Todman  
September 2024

## CHAPTER I THE CEDAR TREE



*A Lebanese Landscape*, acrylic on canvas, 100x70cm, 100x100cm, 70x100cm, 2024



*The Cedars of Lebanon series* | Acrylic on canvas | 85x145 cm | 2024



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*The Cedars of Lebanon* series | Acrylic on canvas | 85x145 cm | 2024



*The Cedars of Lebanon* series | Acrylic on canvas | 85x145 cm | 2024  
*The Cedars of Lebanon* series | Acrylic on canvas | 150x255 cm | 2024 (Pages 18&19)



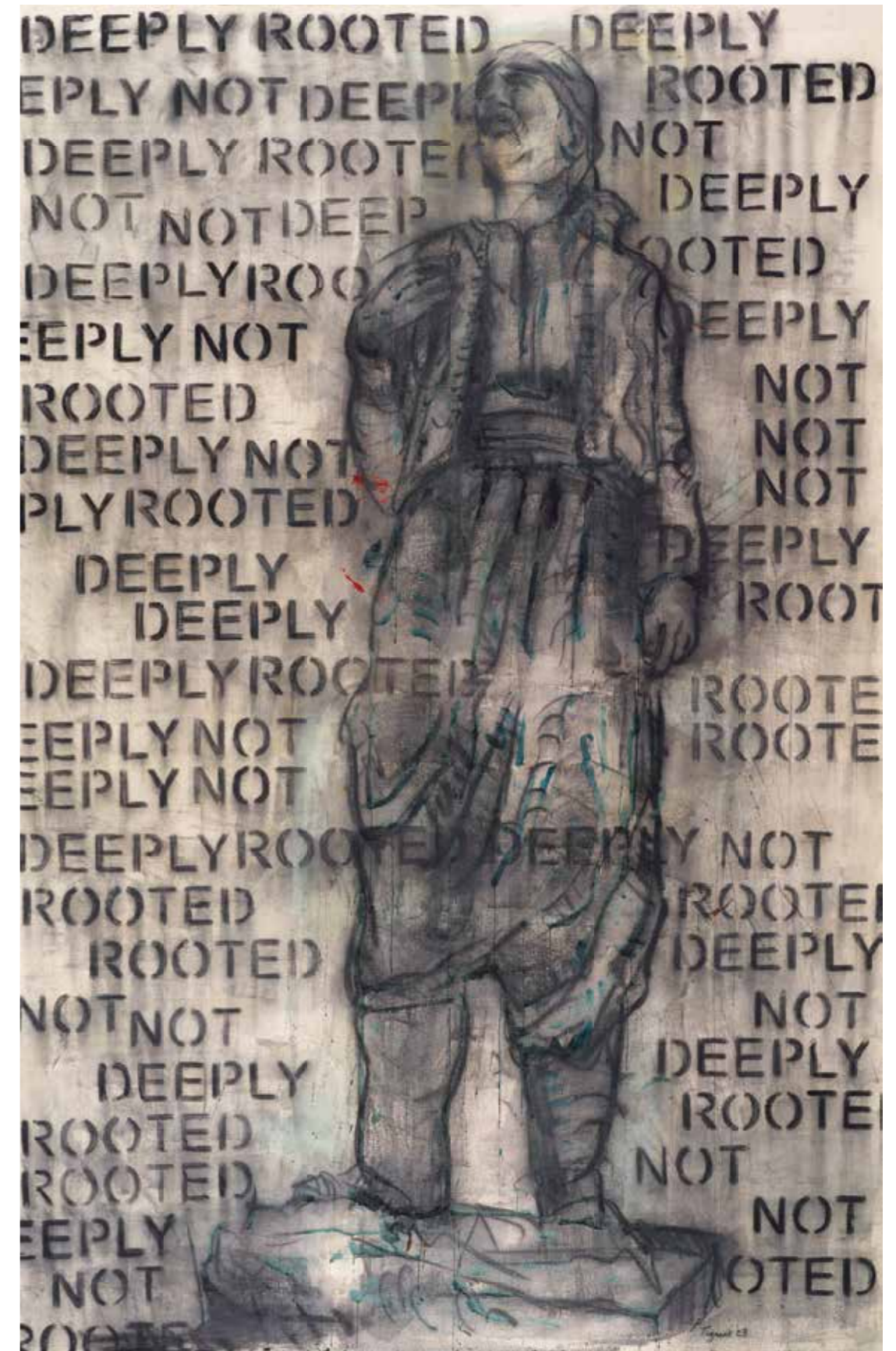


*The Cedars of Lebanon series*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024



*The Cedars of Lebanon series*  
Acrylic on canvas | 140x180 cm | 2024

CHAPTER II  
THE DESIRE OF THE GAZING MAN



*Lebanese Emigrant Statue series*  
Charcoal on canvas  
240x157 cm | 2023



*Lebanese Emigrant Statue* series | Acrylic on sandbag | 100x60 cm each | 2024

*Lebanese Emigrant Statue* series | Acrylic on sandbag | 60x100 cm | 2024



Lebanese Emigrant Statue series | Acrylic on sandbag | 120x97 cm | 2024



Lebanese Emigrant Statue series | Acrylic on paper | 86x75 cm each | 2024



CHAPTER III  
THE ELEPHANT & THE BLIND MEN



After Gebran Khalil Gebran  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024



*Our Lady of Harissa*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024

*Baalbeck*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024



*Fagra Stones*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024





*A Lebanese Landscape*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x255 cm | 2024



*The Pigeon's Rock*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024



*Beirut Port Silos*  
Acrylic on canvas | 150x200 cm | 2024



CHAPTER IV  
THE SOUND & THE SILENCE; ALL EARS?



*The Explosion series* | Acrylic on paper | 22x30 cm each | 2024



*The Explosion series* | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2024



*The Explosion series* | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2024  
*The Explosion series* | Acrylic on canvas | 114x200 cm | 2024 (Pages 50&51)



CHAPTER V  
THE WRECKS



*The Wrecks* series | Acrylic on canvas | 100x100 cm | 2023



*The Wrecks series* | Acrylic on canvas | 100x100 cm | 2023



*The Wrecks series* | Acrylic on canvas | 100x100 cm | 2023



*The Wrecks* series | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



*The Wrecks* series | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2024



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*The Wrecks* series | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2023



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*The Wrecks* series | Acrylic on canvas | 100x120 cm | 2024

## About the Artist

Tagreed Darghouth employs techniques of figurative impressionism to explore universal subjects including violence, popular culture, and marginalised groups. Using powerful impasto layers and a careful attention to the surfaces upon which she paints, Darghouth builds a world that draws attention to the political realities of contemporary life, both in the middle east, and as a part of more global concerns. At root her work asks the viewer to consider the possibilities and limits of human vision, to examine the selective seeing that pervades our lives.

Her influences include British portraitist Lucian Freud and controversial German artist Georg Baselitz as well as old masters such as Rembrandt Van Rijn and Gustave Courbet; and modernists Chaim Soutine and Willem De Kooning.

Darghouth studied Superior studies, Painting and Sculpting at the Lebanese University of Fine Art, Beirut, Lebanon in 2000 followed by Space Art at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD), Paris, France in 2003. In 2000 and 2001 she trained under the Syrian-German artist Marwan Kassab Bashi at Darat Al Funoun in Amman. In 2004, Darghouth had her first solo exhibition, *Still Features*, at Zico House in Beirut and since then has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Beirut and internationally.

Selected solo and group exhibitions include: *Arteclassica, 3era*, Feria de Arte, Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2006; *Mirror, Mirror!*, Agial Art Gallery, Beirut in 2008; *Subtitled: With Narratives from Lebanon* at the Royal College of Art in London in 2011; *Canticle of Death*, Agial Art Gallery, Beirut in 2011; *Re-orientation II*, Rose Issa Project, London, UK in 2012; *Thin Skin: Six Artists from Beirut* at Taymour Grahne Gallery in New York in 2014; *Vision Machines*, Agial Art Gallery, Beirut in 2015; *100 Chefs d'Oeuvre de L'Art Moderne et Contemporain Arabe*, La Collection Barjeel, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France in 2017; *Analogy to Human Life*, Saleh Barakat Gallery, Beirut in 2018; *Toys and Trophies: From Zeus' Pandora to Barbie Doll*, Tabari Artspace, Dubai, UAE in 2020 and *A City Undisguised; Beirut: No Home No Exile*, Cromwell Place, London, UK in 2022. She currently works and lives in the UAE.



SALEH BARAKAT GALLERY

صالون البركات

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