

# TABARI

ARTSPACE



## **Toys and Trophies: From Zeus' Pandora to Barbie Doll Tagreed Darghouth Solo**

Tabari Artspace, DIFC, Dubai October 20, 2020

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.

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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 Dargouth'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. Dargouth 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."

-ENDS-

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### **ABOUT TAGREED DARGHOUTH**

B. 1979 in Saida, Lebanon Tagreed Darghouth currently lives in Beirut, Lebanon. She obtained a degree in Fine Arts at the Lebanese University in Beirut, as well as a diploma in art education. Tagreed's social and political themes draw attention to forms of structural violence and misconceptions of the Other. In 2004, Darghouth had her first solo exhibition, Still Features, at Zico House in Beirut, which was then followed by Falling Parts at the Goethe institute in Beirut in 2006. She has since had several solo exhibitions in Agial Art Gallery, including, Mirror, Mirror! In 2008, Fair & Lovely in 2010, Cantic of Death in 2011, Rehearsals in 2013, and Vision Machines, Shall You See Me Better Now? In 2015. Most recently, in 2019 Tabari ArtSpace, Dubai held Darghouth's solo exhibition Strange Fruit. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions around the world, in Al-Sharjah, Amman, Beirut, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Doha, Dubai, Jordan, Istanbul, London, Miami, Berlin, New York, Paris, and Singapore, among other cities, which includes the 10th Anniversary of the Kasa Art Gallery exhibition in Istanbul in 2010, Connecting Heavens at Green Art Gallery in Dubai in 2010, Subtitled: With Narratives from Lebanon at the Royal College of Art in London in 2011, and Thin Skin: Six Artists from Beirut at Taymour Grahne Gallery in New York in 2014.

### **ABOUT TABARI ARTSPACE**

Tabari ArtSpace, formerly ArtSpace Dubai, was established in 2003 by art collector Maliha Tabari, with the aim of promoting Middle Eastern art to a global audience. Strategically located in Dubai, seventeen years ago the gallery embarked upon an ambitious programme of exhibitions with the aim of cultivating an international community and creating fresh discourses centered around contemporary Middle Eastern art. As a pioneer of this movement Tabari ArtSpace played a pivotal role in establishing the careers of the Middle Eastern Masters that are collected and exhibited internationally today. Tabari ArtSpace continues to honour the masters it built in the past while introducing a new generation of artists that have matured in an era of technology, globalisation, and unprecedented socio-political issues. In 2017 the gallery rebranded from ArtSpace Dubai to Tabari ArtSpace. The name 'Tabari' stems from Lake Tiberias and brings into focus our understanding of borders, space, and identity - just some of the universal topics tackled by the Middle Eastern artists of the 'now'. As Middle Eastern art continues to flourish in front of an international audience Tabari ArtSpace puts forward a programme of artists that challenge its conventions, push boundaries, and break down borders with fresh approaches. "As our geographical borders blur in our era of mass-migration art has the ability to capture and communicate key social issues that are relevant for all. We now welcome a new wave of Middle Eastern artists that uphold an international outlook. A generation that seeks change and progress." -Maliha Tabari, 2019