

THE PHASE OF THINGS TO COME
Works by Faraz Aamer Khan

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition
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The Heavens Through a Sieve

Dua Abbas Rizvi

*I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.¹*

A few months ago, I had the opportunity of talking to Halsey Rodman, a visual artist hailing from New York whose work, to put it grossly simply, is a means for him to disassemble the world around him and look at it anew. Rodman's installations, his dalliances with shapes and colours, made me question why, in this wide world full of wonders, we insist on looking out of square windows. It seldom changes. Huts, houses, watchtowers – the openings are rectilinear. Our most common view of the world comes framed in angles. The windows perforating ship or airplane cabins, of course, do not conform to this angularity but then again, how often do we find ourselves floating untethered in the air or on the high seas?

For an ongoing project titled '*Gradually/We Became Aware/Of a Hum in the Room*', Rodman set up a triangular structure in the middle of a Californian desert. The three identical rooms of this single-storeyed, pie-slice building all contain a perfectly circular window each, allowing three different views of the ascetic landscape. It is remarkable how much your perception of the world can change with a change in the shape of a window. It was as if the sky turned bluer, the boulders thicker and rounder and more contentious for your attention, the foliage brighter and thornier as it forced itself into your vision – and all because you looked out at the dry desert world through a round window. The world was summarised for you and you were offered the choicest bits.

*When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.²*

Upon looking at Faraz Aamer Khan's work, I was reminded of Rodman's because the idea of looking at the world differently and authentically, looking at it for one's own, seems to be

¹Stevens, Wallace. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" from *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969. Print.

²Ibid.

common to both practices. Khan, who graduated from the National College of Arts, Lahore, a year ago, employs smoke and mirrors (mostly figurative, sometimes literal – the smoke being charcoal dust in that case) to constantly challenge and confound his own observation of the universe as well as others'. Trained primarily in Indo-Persian miniature painting, Khan is also a musician. Therefore, he is no stranger to the rigours of repetition. One can make marks on many kinds of surfaces and try to pluck meaning from them all. And though logic dictates that the greater the number of marks, the more complex the design (all those marks must be raising Babel, surely), that is not how it usually is. Repetition becomes a means not to complexity but to simplicity, to a kind of poverty – every mark taking away rather than bestowing detail.

Khan, a fervent admirer of a home-grown minimalist tradition that includes the practices of Nasreen Mohamedi and Lala Rukh, here presents a group of twenty works on paper that document his 'reckoning of the earth' ('...*have you reckon'd the earth much?/Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?/Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?*'³). Through gradients of colour, inky washes, linear traces, faint rubs and smudges, these works evoke the calm of vastness, the sublime without the terror. They are essentially multiple sightings of the familiar that surrounds us, the firmament that roofs us. They range from sullen depictions of the sea at night to impromptu-seeming captures of flickering sunsets to renditions of those bewitched hours when the skies retain a bit of both day and night, or when the day or the night is draining from them, leaving them impossibly colourless. A circle appears in most of these impressions – at times small, bright, and distant, like the moon, at times large, central, and resolutely smeared to resemble the swift ascent of a comet. The heavens surround a circle in some and in others, they are held within a circle. Everything you see is ephemeral, Khan suggests, but most ephemeral of all is your own perception of things.

*I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.*⁴

Can the awe of the first sentient being to have seen the moon or the sea or a shower of stars ever be replicated? Can an original sighting of these things still occur, replete with a

³Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983. Print

⁴Stevens, Wallace. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" from *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969. Print.

manic understanding of our own smallness? We are a generation entirely submerged in minutiae: we know what outer space looks like from earth, what the earth looks like from outer space, we know what it looked like once and what it will look like ten, fifty, a hundred years from now, we know these wonders inside out and upside down. How is that first gasp to be had again? In revisiting these phenomena, armed with the urgency of drawing, Khan attempts an ensnaring of primordial awe. His works, when arrayed and viewed in a sequence, play out a cycle in which cognition is followed by dissociation, which is followed by recollection, then recognition. This progression is also present in an accompanying video by the artist, wherein sound reverberates to visual projections that keep multiplying until all sense is first acquired, then lost, then reacquired.

The provisional treatment of these works is crucial to the meaning, or aspirations, of Khan's practice. It allows him to approach his subject again and again without risking the tedium or finality of laboured image-making. His studies are truer for being less determinate, less complete. They align with his inclination to question what he confronts and, having arrived at an answer, question even that.



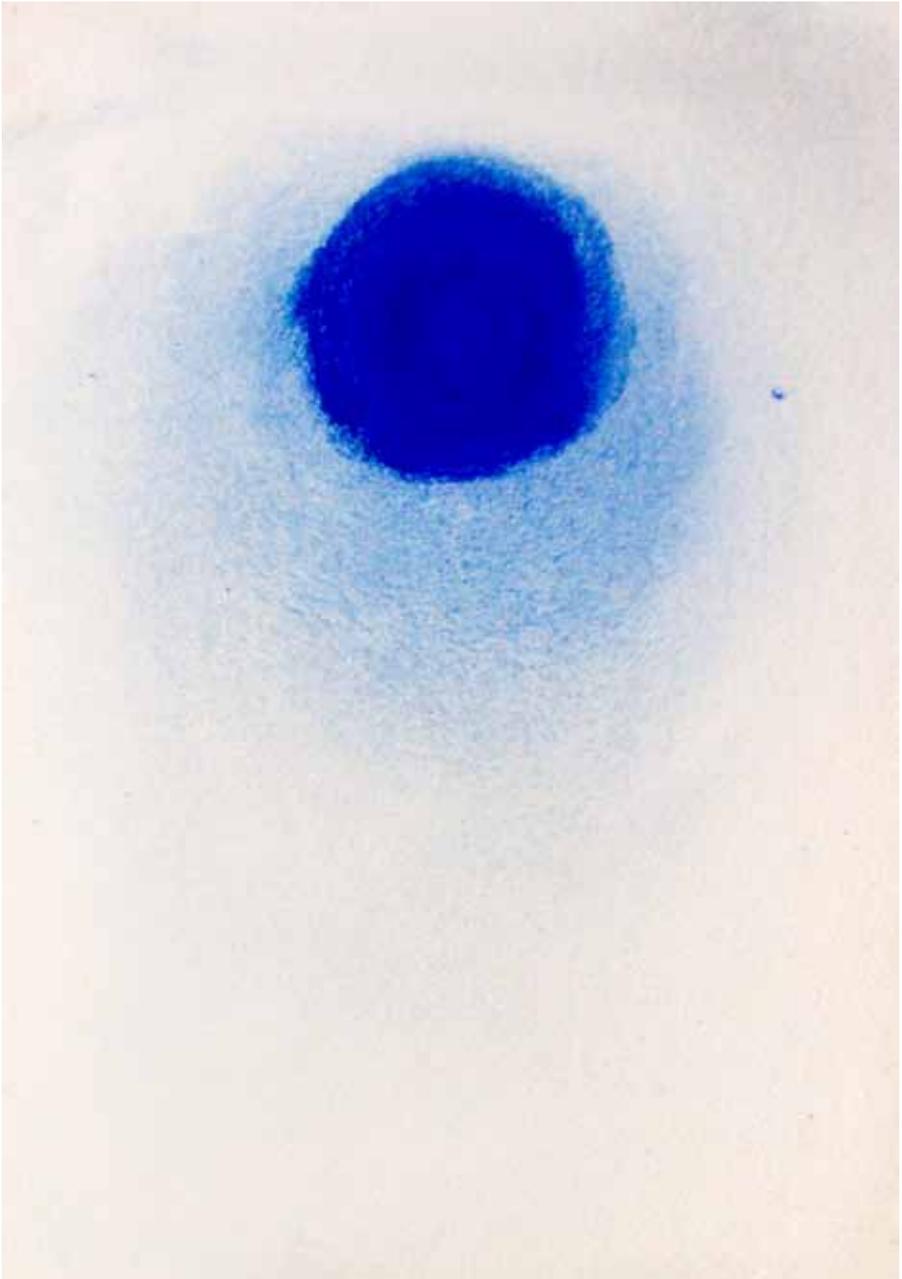
The Sky Encased I
Pigment on archival paper
18 x 15 cm
2017



The Sky Encased II
Pigment on archival paper
15 x 18 cm
2017



The Sky Encased III
Pigment on archival paper
18 x 13 cm
2017



An Undisclosed State I
Pigment on archival paper
16 x 13 cm
2017



An Undisclosed State II
Pigment on archival paper
18 x 15 cm
2017



The Path Revealed I
Watercolour on Arches paper
53 x 34 cm
2017



The Path Revealed II
Watercolour on Arches paper
53 x 37 cm
2017



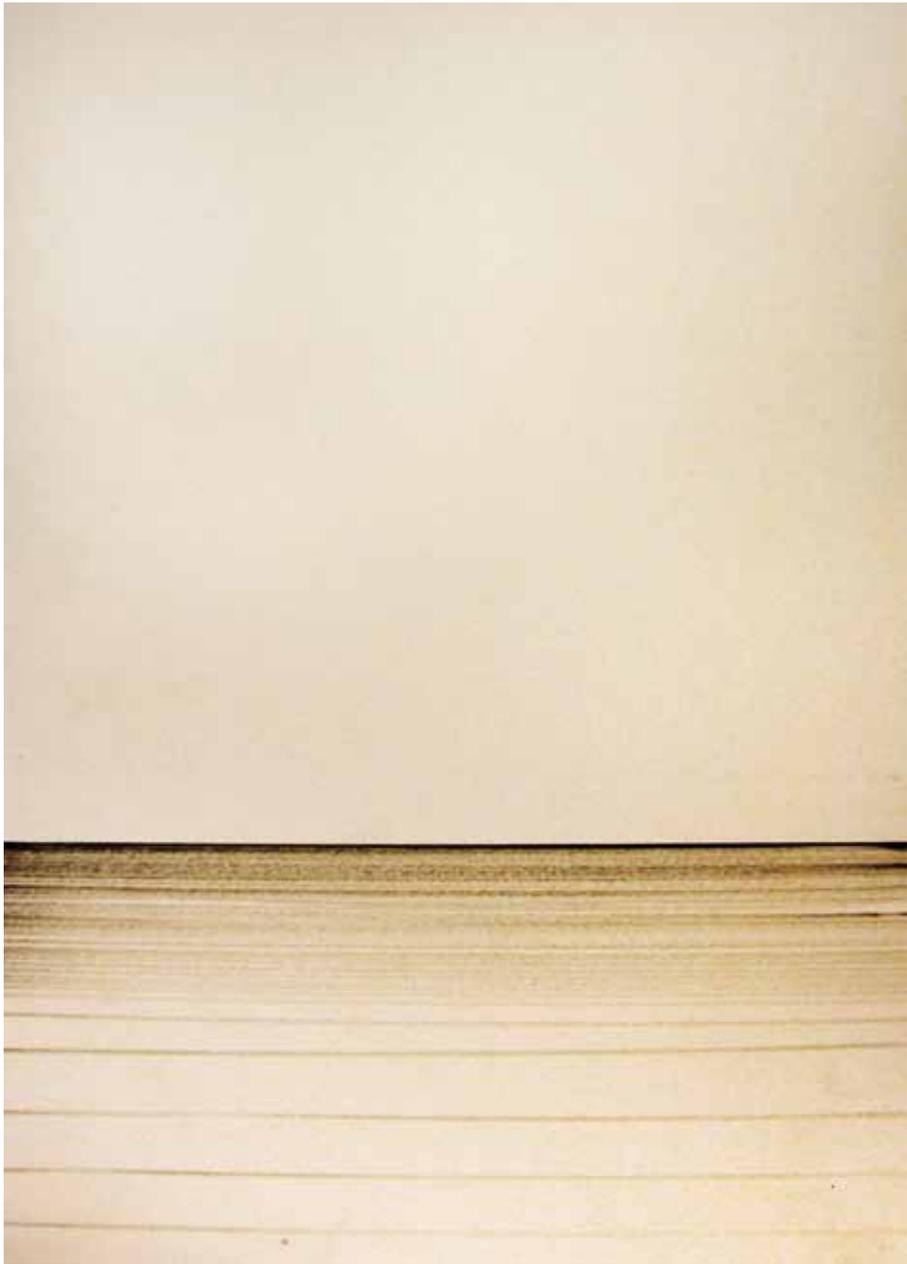
Motionless Departure I
Pigment on archival paper
11 x 18 cm
2017



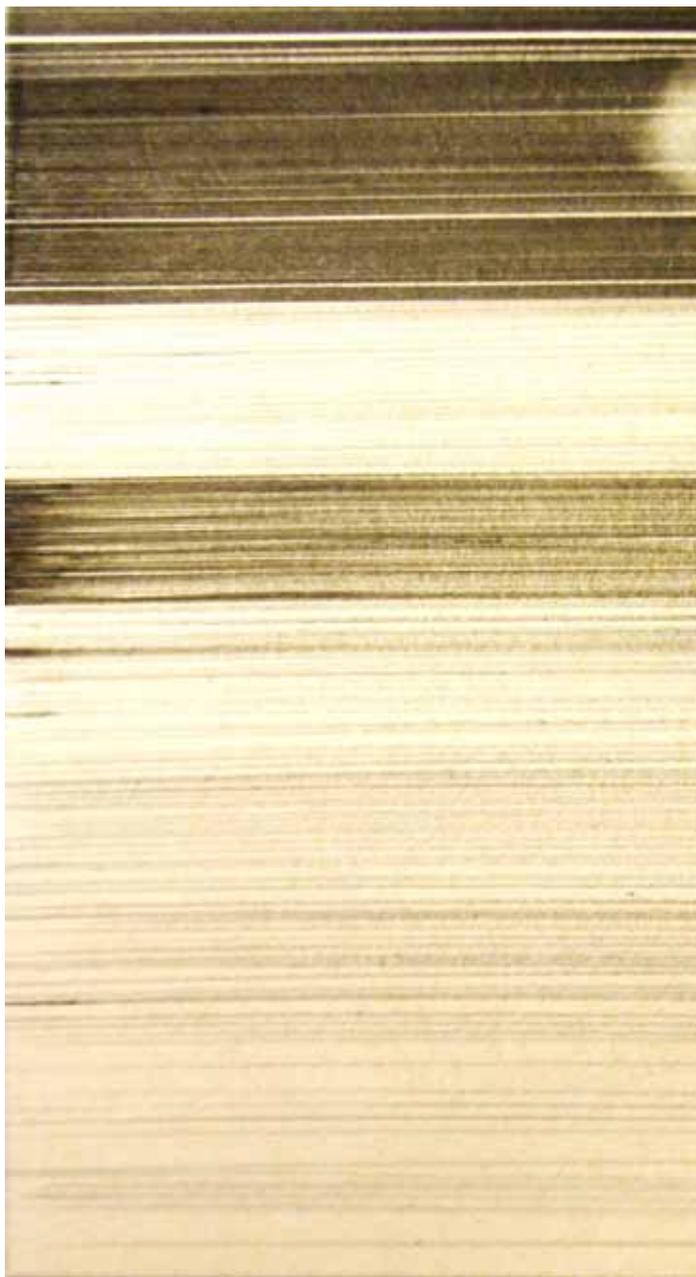
Motionless Departure II
Watercolour on archival paper
33 x 26 cm
2017



Before
Ink on washi
30 x 20 cm
2017



Now
Ink on washi
32 x 24 cm
2017



& Forever
Ink on wasli
27 x 25 cm
2017





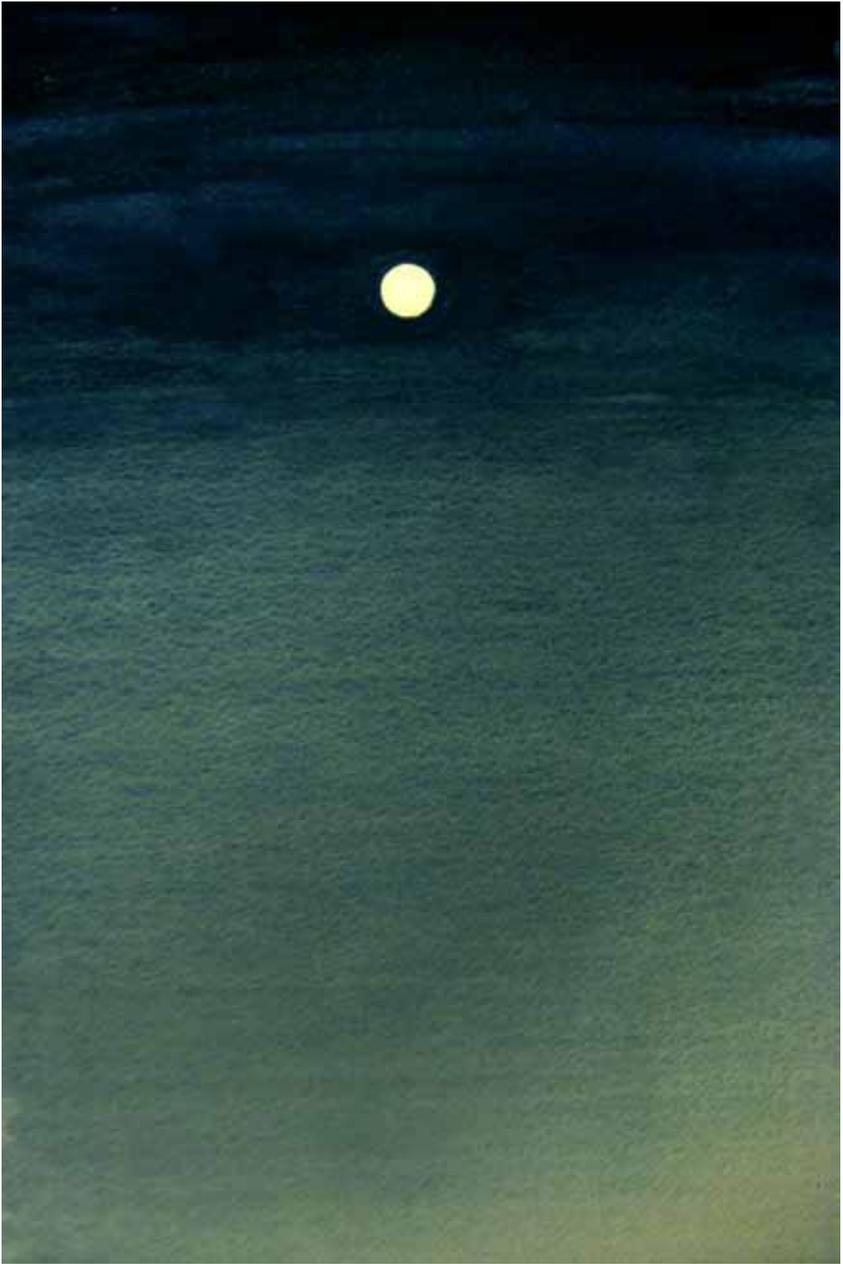
Motionless Arrival I
Pigment on archival paper
20 x 15 cm
2017



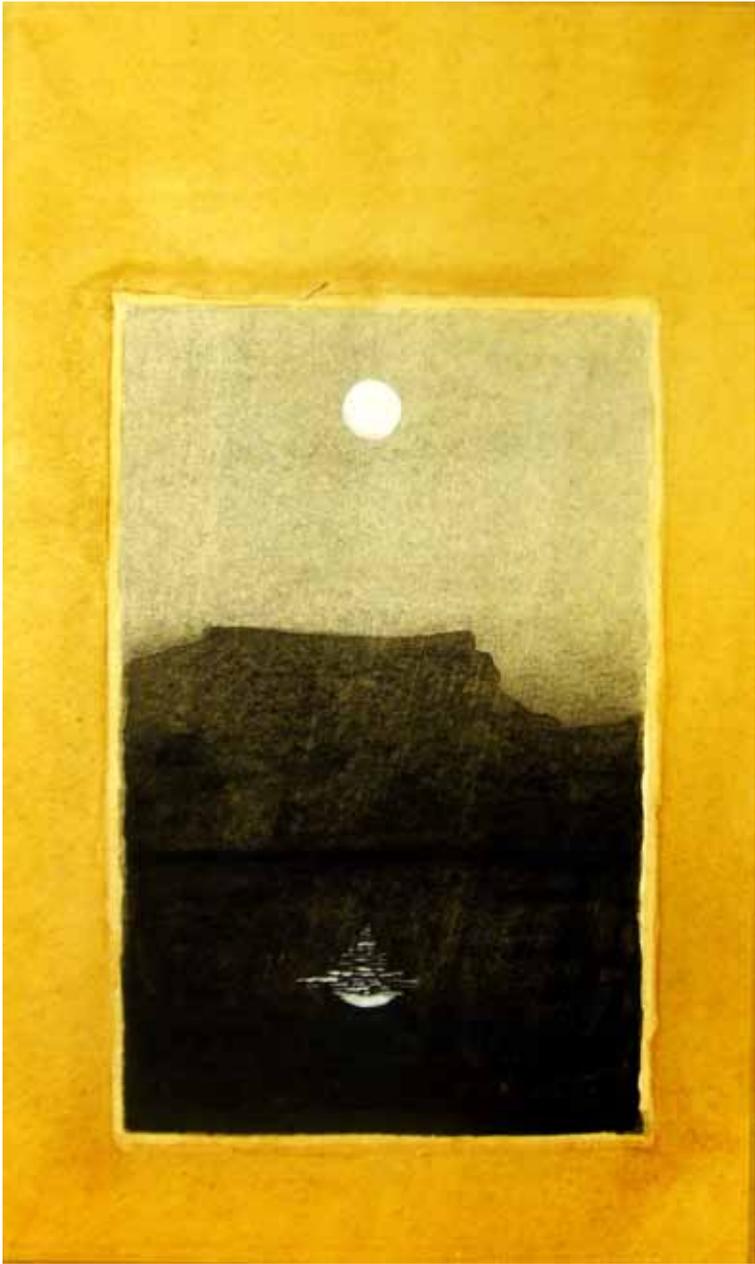
Motionless Arrival II
Watercolour on archival paper
34 x 20 cm
2017



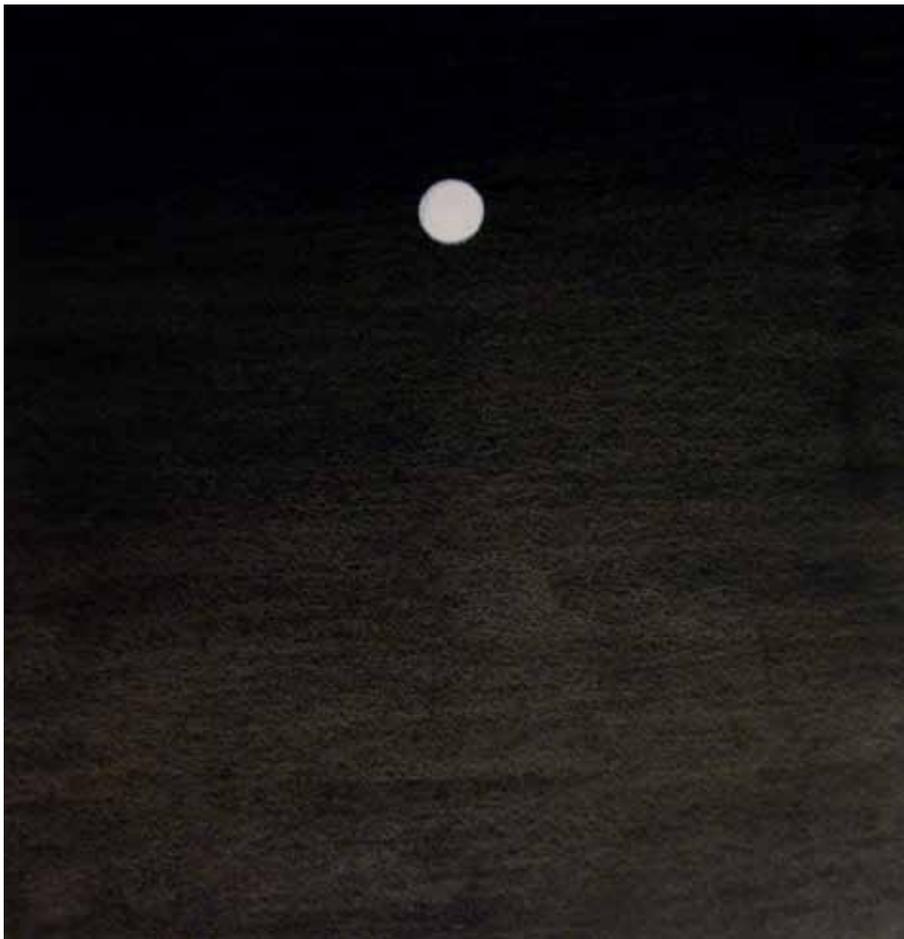
The Nothing That Is
Watercolour on Arches paper
45 x 28 cm
2017



The Nothing That Will Be
Watercolour on Arches paper
36 x 23 cm
2017



Gliding Past
Watercolour on wasli
27 x 16 cm
2017



A Mirrored Void
Watercolour on Arches paper
28 x 28 cm
2017



of No Resolve
Ink on archival paper
23 x 33 cm
2017



Reprise
Pigment on archival paper
26 x 18 cm
2017

Biography

Faraz Aamer Khan is a visual artist who graduated from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2016. His practice includes site specific and sound based installation among a wide range of mediums. Trained as a miniature painter from his alma mater and achieving a distinction upon graduation from the department of fine arts, he has exhibited over major cities in Pakistan. His main stay in his practice however comes from his love for music and exploration of his concerns through experimentation. A bassist at heart he has remained true to his musical aspirations alongside his band Posheeza Dosheeda while his work revolves around the exploration of transitory states, and the reflection and resonance they invoke. His visual subject matter alludes to the ever changing nature of the universe, its entropy and the question of existence and all it pertains through his canvases, sheets of paper, installations and musical leanings.

Statement

Faraz Aamer Khan's artistic concerns involve reflection and resonance. His main body of work has come after a long process of experimentation and research, dabbling in different disciplines, mediums and modes of production and expression; from paper to music to canvas and even installations.

Throughout his work the reflective nature of our shared existence plays a key role. His work takes on the task of catharsis for his ever searching person. Medium across medium, visual to visual, it's all an exercise to affirm and question everything.

The evolution of his imagery in the work then; is slow and laborious yet always touching upon the notion of how mirrors act totally upon the whims of the on looker. Even in the reflective space, while they, the viewer, can see multiple images and meanings of everything else, they can only view one vantage point of their self interpretation; their multiple images being un-viewable only to them, the beholder.





“THE PHASE OF THINGS TO COME”

The body of work in this exhibition reflects an observation onto the universe. Contained within these lithe works on paper are multiple views of the same singular, observable vision the human experience allows us to view; our sky, or more un-poetically; the atmosphere.

It is within this structure of the elements where the main source of inspiration comes regarding the reflection of our existence as a whole. The all encompassing unity of a single circular point amidst an ink soaked blanket in the heavens, the multitude of shapes that inhabit this sky and even the imaginary horizon that stretches to the ends of our viewing capacity, informs the visual of the pieces.

The coalesce of this exhibition as a whole needed the individual imagery to be deconstructed to much more dramatically simpler renderings.

A phasing of sorts.

The clarity of vision is that which is present in all of these “-scapes” at the same time. Transitions of colours and the essence of space all breaking down to a binary and then reconstructing itself like a looping image; resonating to its own frequency. Every piece is of the same sky, multiplied to a small fraction of what is infinitely possible to view and yet each rendering of that same sky being equal to the other in its own truth and viewing.

Faraz Aamer Khan

S A N A T

