



***LIGHTNESS OF BEING***  
**TAYSEER BARAKAT**

23 January - 15 February 2017



Tayseer Barakat's *Lightness of Being* brings together his most recent work, an extraordinary series of paintings produced over the course of two years. Steeped both in the long history of Arab visual art and mythology, and in contemporary aesthetics of political struggle, the collection is a stunning exploration of anger, pain and endurance.

The paintings are peopled by silhouettes, rendered a flat style that recalls the ancient art and cave paintings from which Barakat draws, but layered onto each canvas to produce an uncertain depth. Sometimes immersed or obscured by their surroundings, sometimes emerging starkly from them, the figures are buffeted by swirling colours and patterns that repeat insistently across the series. Recurring motifs – walls against which figures are frozen, the bird that perches but is never in flight – further bind a collection of paintings which, though different, share a simultaneous sense of poised immobility and furious struggle.

Here, perhaps, lies the reason for the exhibition's titular connection to Kundera's novel of the 1968 Prague Spring, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. The novel's characters are writers and artists for whom, in the depths of oppression and darkness, existence is revealed as weightless, untethered; the paintings share a certain sense of the fragility of life lived in the face of despair. Yet by citing this particular text – an existential Czech novel most celebrated in contested translations, or in the American film Kundera rejected – Barakat surely does more than simply acknowledge a philosophical inspiration. His collection plays with references ancient and modern, including repeated jumbles of faded text. But it does not produce a smooth synthesis of styles. Rather, it performs their sometimes difficult interactions, articulating the contested nature of Palestine's place among the global struggles and suffering of the twenty-first century, and the ways this may be navigated, or not, by language and by art.

Hannah Deuchar  
January 2017

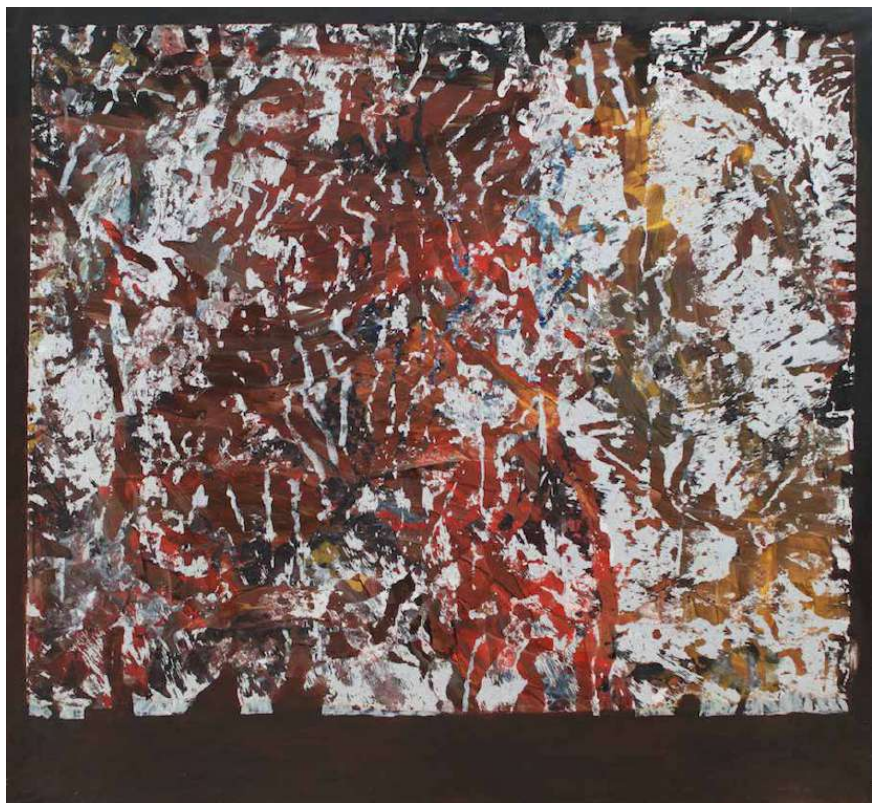


*Everpresent Love I*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 120 cm





*Everpresent Love II*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 120 cm

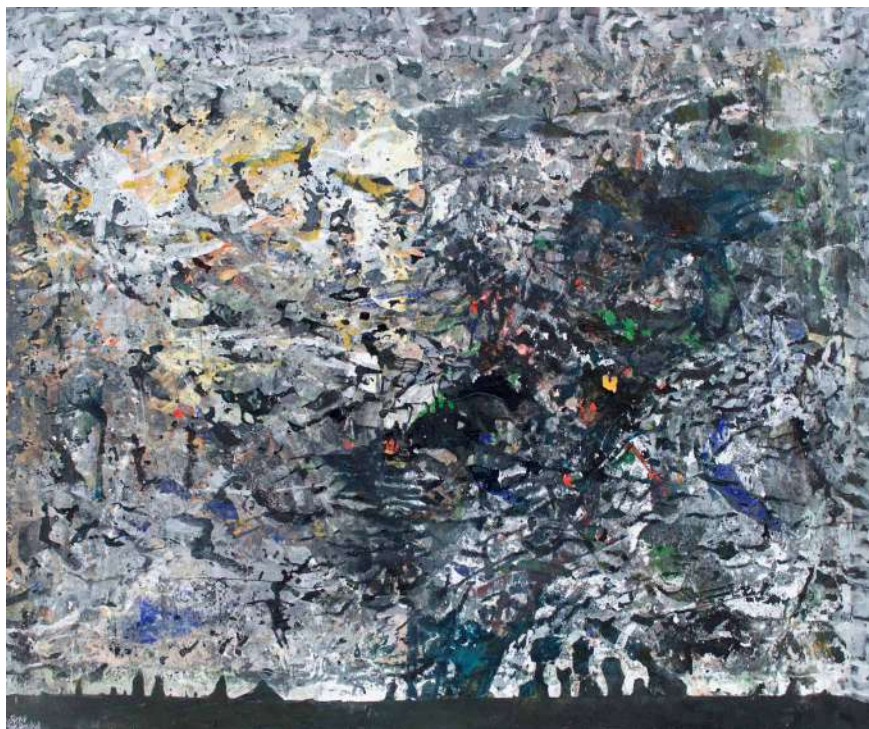


*Lightness of Being*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 160 cm



*Survivals*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 160 x 120 cm





*State of Conflict*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 120 cm



*Freedom Dance*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 165 cm





*The Flute Player*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 118 cm



*Flying High*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 122 cm

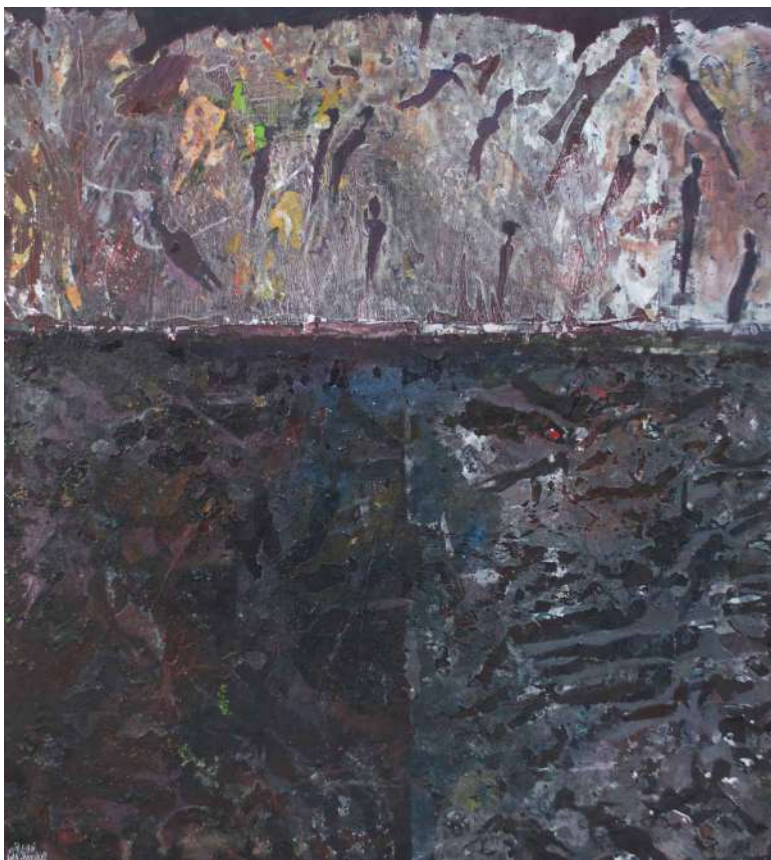


*Quest for Freedom*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 165 x 125 cm





*On the Way Home*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 125 x 107 cm



*Fade to Black*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 90 cm



*Unknown Fate*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm





*Temporary Peace*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 158 x 122 cm



*The Destination*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 151 x 122 cm



*Somewhere in Time I*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 118 x 155 cm





*Somewhere in Time II*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 150 cm



*Ashes of Love*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 154 x 114 cm



*Lullaby*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 78 cm





*Untitled*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 103 cm



*Intimacy*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 107 cm



*Love on the Edge*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 128 x 154 cm

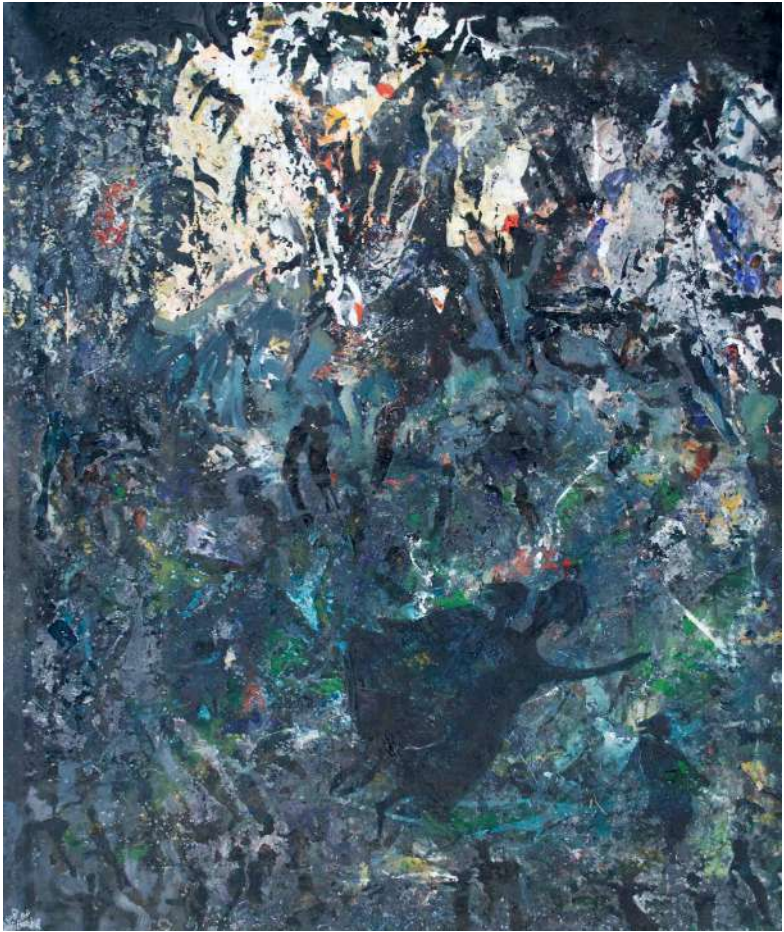




*Inner Silence*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 129 x 155 cm



*Farewell*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 145 x 119 cm



*Glory*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100 cm





*Eternity*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



*Memorial Photo*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 144 x 119 cm



*Nostalgia*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 165 x 125 cm





*Remnants*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 64 x 80 cm



*Rebirth*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



*Speed of Light*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 59 cm





*Escaping the Present*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

**Tayseer Barakat** was born in Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza in 1959 and carried out his arts education in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1983. After completing his studies, he moved to Ramallah where he has been based ever since – both teaching and creating art.

Barakat has worked with a variety of materials and has experimented widely – with wood, metal and glass –, becoming one of Palestine's foremost artists working today. Painting remains his first love and he continues to work at a prolific rate, drawing on the artistic heritage of the region and its ancient influences, and of Palestine, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian spirit.

Barakat has held 10 solo exhibitions and has participated in numerous group exhibitions with many of his contemporaries in Japan, USA, Brazil, Europe and across the Arab world.



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