

Hagoogtir/Unveiling

Najaax Harun

26 September — 3 November 2024

Catinca Tabacaru Gallery is thrilled to open its new season with two captivating solo exhibitions which bring into focus the standing of women in what is often considered opposing social and political systems: Western and Muslim worlds.

HAGOOGTIR—meaning “unveiling”—reflects Najaax’s resolve to illuminate the obscured realities shaping women’s existence. Committed to breaking the silence that has veiled these issues around the world, Najaax draws on her own experiences as part of the post-civil war generation, witnessing the persistence of outdated norms. Her paintings become a personal mission, shining light on entrenched patterns and provoking introspection. The work stands as a beacon, challenging the status quo and inviting a dialogue that inspires transformation toward a future of authenticity, awareness, and enlightenment.

“My desire to approach the canvas emerged from a profound need to understand and communicate myself to the world, carrying the stories around me.”

Somaliland’s history is a tapestry woven with threads of colonial disruption and post-war reconstruction. British rule reinforced and intensified existing patriarchal structures by embedding stricter gender norms and excluding women from political and economic spheres. As Somaliland emerged from colonialism into the chaos of civil conflict, the imposition of Sharia law sought to unify a fractured society. This shift further entrenched conservative values and the confluence of colonial legacies, wartime upheaval, and religious codification sculpted Somaliland into a society where the hopes and participation of women is largely ignored.

Armed with this personal history of growing up in a country still awaiting international recognition, Najaax’s paintings reveal for us the secret lives of the women around her. Women, whose lives are progressing within, and parallel to, an ever-present patriarchal structure. But, also women who are acutely aware of how their existence is often misunderstood as a cultural norm; how the Western gaze, lacking in historical context or significant cultural understanding, looks upon them as powerless victims. They are anything but victims.

Najaax reveals to us the power, resistance and sexuality of her subjects in her first solo exhibition, HAGOOGTIR | UNVEILING running at Catinca Tabacaru, Bucharest September 26 through November 3, 2024.