

BREATHING LIGHT

Khadija S. Akhtar & Rabia S. Akhtar

7 DECEMBER, 2021

5 — 8 PM

Continues till 22 December,



KOEL

GALLERY

Khadija S. Akhtar



Khadija S. Akhtar is a Karachi based visual artist. She received her BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 2019 with a distinction in her thesis, and was placed on the Dean's List. Akhtar majored in Traditional Miniature Painting and New Media Art. In January 2020, she was chosen to participate in This is Me: Identity and Art in an Emerging Pakistan (Ohio, USA), where she was selected as one of the ten artists for the nationwide exhibition. Akhtar was also one of the ten winners who received the Young Artist Award for 'Best Artwork of the Year', amongst 410 participants in the national exhibition Resilience, at the Alhamra Art Center (Lahore, Pakistan).

Khadija has also worked along-side various local and international platforms, including Manchester Museum, Aafrinish by Niazi and Marvi Mazhar & Associates. She is currently working on the international, collaborative project Artdom, founded by Arghavan Agida, the former Goodwill Ambassador for UN women in Sweden. Khadija is also one of the three recipients of the Arjumand Painting Award, 2021.

Like water, the ebb and flow of memory remains in a state of continuous transformation. As recollections of the past are altered by contemporary circumstances, they grow increasingly fragile and precious. With this knowledge, artist Khadija S. Akhtar attempts to chase and reimagine the ephemeral joy of what once was. The artist's battle against depression leads to an intimate quest, seeking and depicting spaces of comfort, as a process of retrieving episodic memories, processing trauma, and questioning history.

In jewel-toned colours, luminous beasts reign free, gardens grow savage, breakfast trays of pastries with lustrous creams and sugar sit abandoned amongst portrait photographs, wild flora and fauna, and eccentric kitchen paraphernalia. Through overwhelming frenzy and fantastic interferences, Akhtar underscores absence. No human presence appears to consume the honeyed bread or prune the riotous daisies, therefore the space appears ghostly, lost in time, as the world beyond is erased.

The artist finds cheer in alienation however, as she wades through layers of time and illustrates scenarios that combine history and the present, truth and fiction, pleasure and melancholy. Akhtar's usage of objects, creatures and environments stem from the narratives of the past, but ultimately shed their skin and together form a new and transcended sanctuary. A safe space, which assures that there is splendour to be found in truly everything, even in times of sadness.

-Khadija S. Akhtar



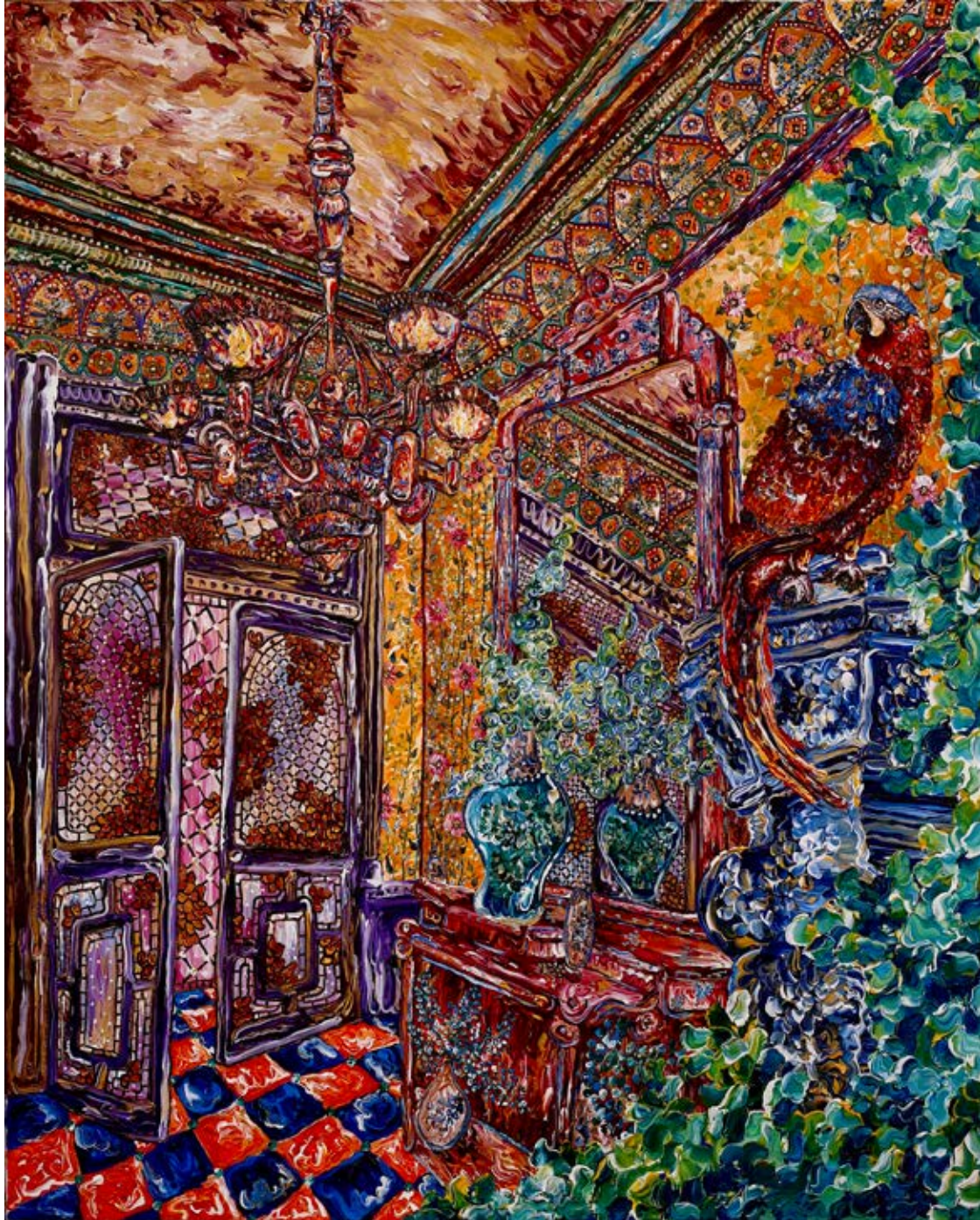
Kindred Spirits , 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 42x65 inches



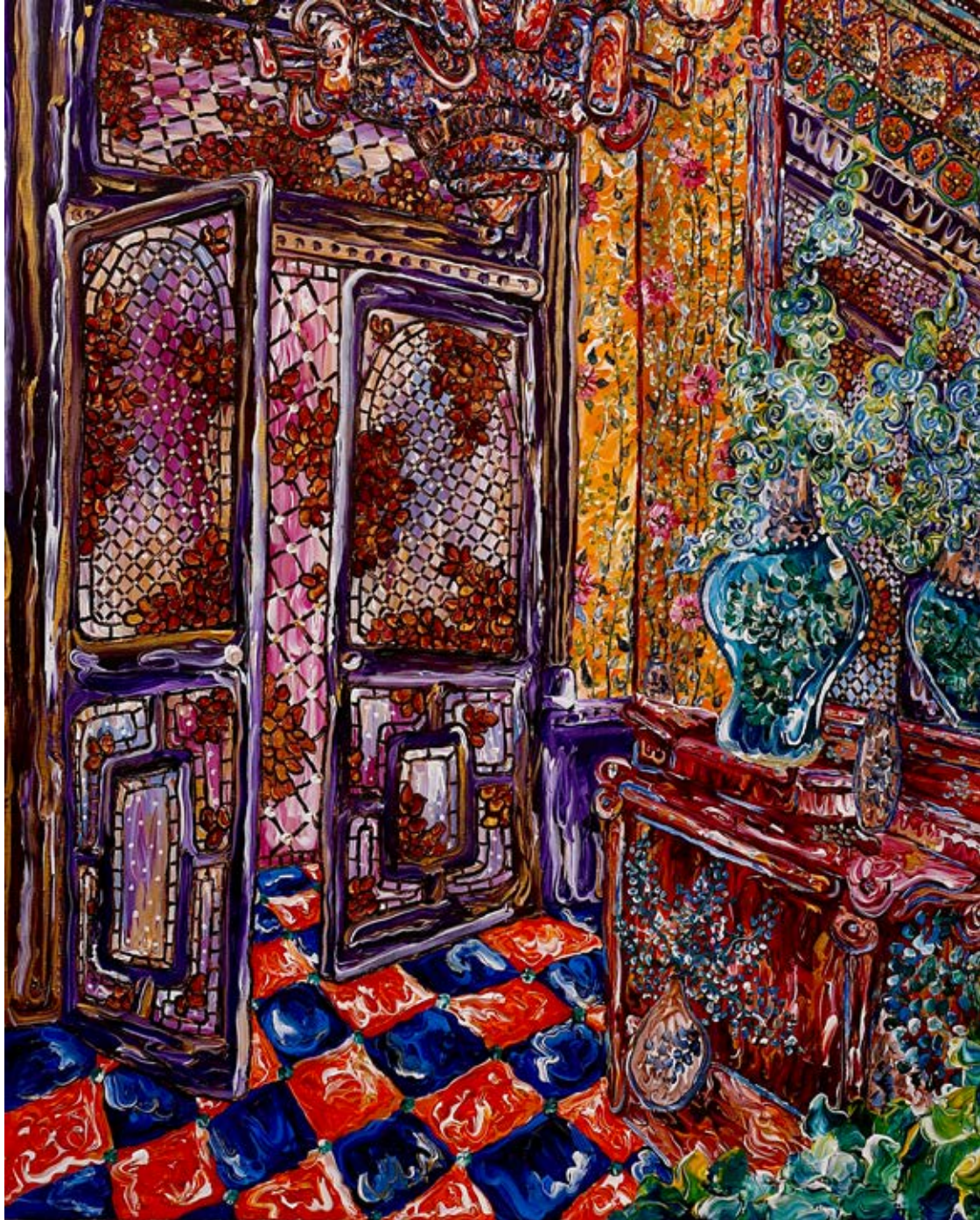
Kindred Spirits , 2021 (Detail)



Kindred Spirits , 2021 (Detail)



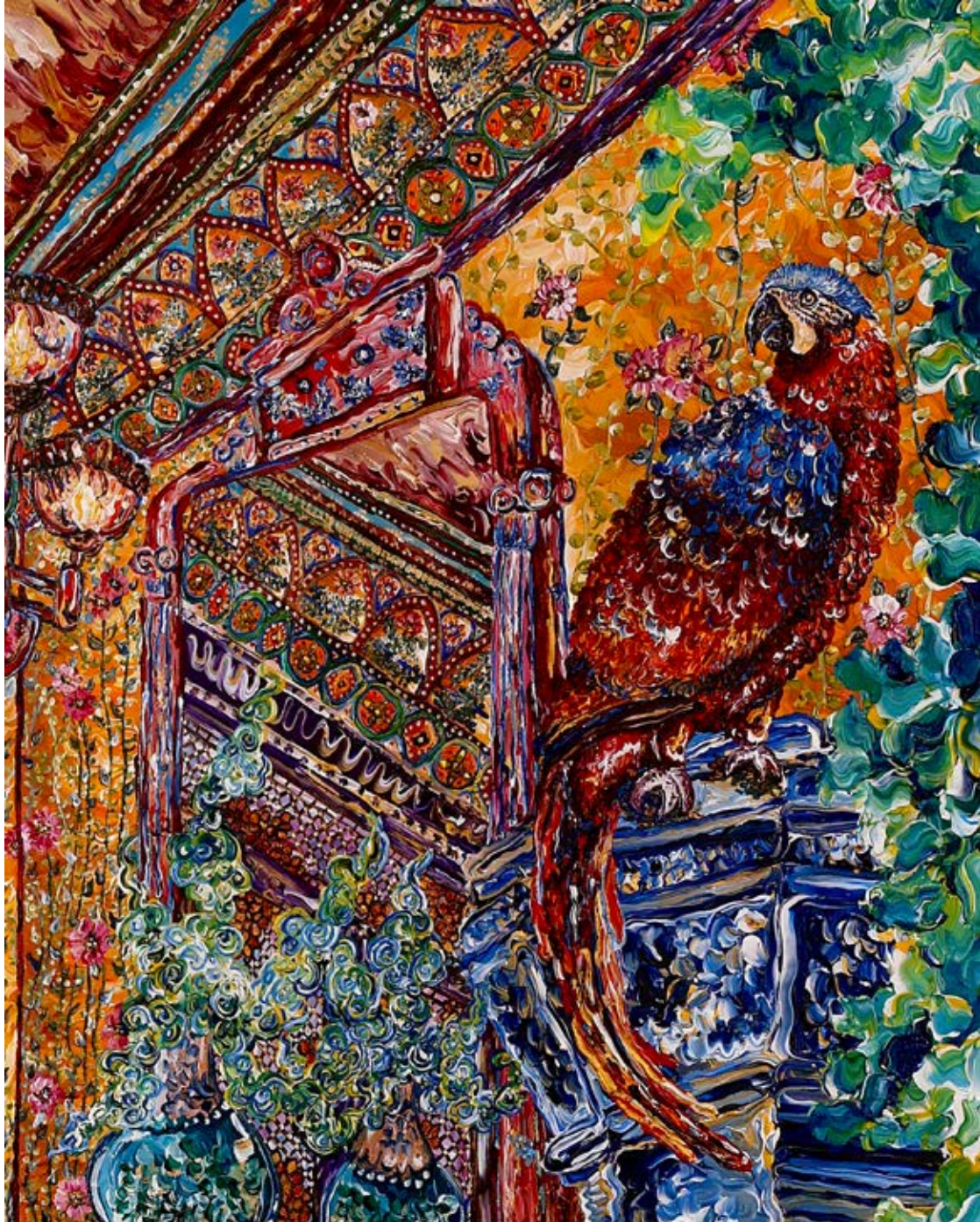
Tainted Walls , 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 40x50 inches



Tainted Walls , 2021 (Detail)



Tainted Walls , 2021 (Detail)



Tainted Walls, 2021 (Detail)



Feels like Home, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas, 30x30 inches



Feels like Home, 2021, (Detail)



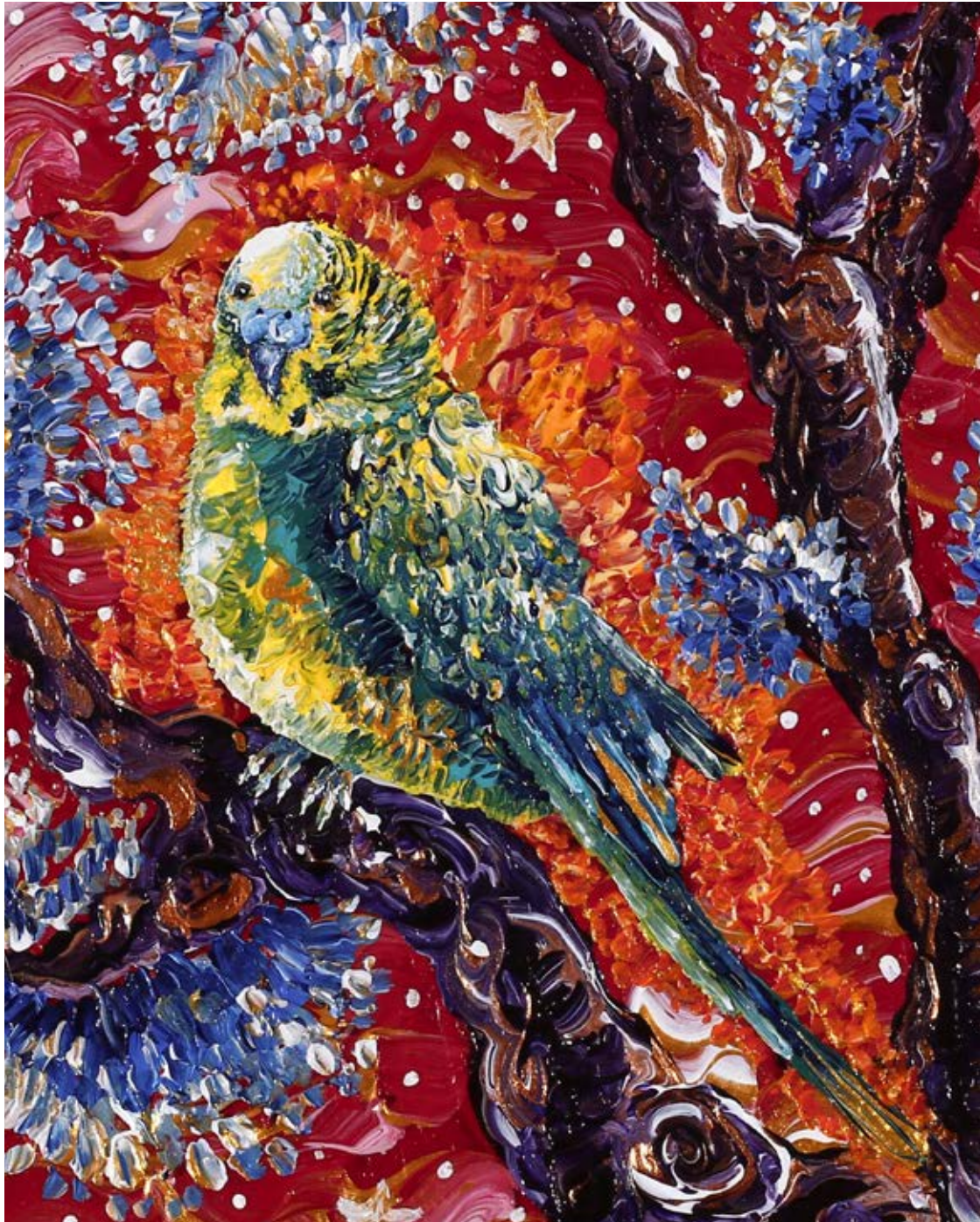
Red Box, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas, 30x30 inches



Red Box, 2021 (Detail)



Candy Breeze, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas, 6x6 inches



Candy Breeze, 2021 (Detail)



Wet Dreams, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 72 inches



Wet Dreams, 2021 (Detail)



Wet Dreams, 2021 (Detail)



Wet Dreams, 2021 (Detail)



Wet Dreams, 2021 (Detail)



Rabia S. Akhtar





Rabia S. Akhtar is a Karachi based visual artist and writer. She received her BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 2015, majoring in traditional Miniature painting. Within her practice, Rabia examines the conflict between anthropocentric thought and the quasi-sacred dreams of otherworldly animal kingdoms, centering her narratives around the intimate fallacies of childhood memory and fantasy.

Rabia has showcased her work locally and internationally, at spaces including the Ministry for Gozo (Malta) and the Czong Institute of Contemporary Art Museum (South Korea). In 2020, her artist book 'Bogus Villa Buds' was displayed at Focal Point 2020, an art book fair arranged by the Sharjah Art Foundation. She has taken part in residencies including a collaborative AiR program initiated by the Valetta 2018 Foundation and Fondazzjoni Kreattività, as well as 'Locating Word' and 'Taaza Taareen 12', initiated by Vasl Artists' Collective. Rabia has written a children's book which will be published through Oxford University Press, Pakistan, later this year. She has also produced content for various platforms, including ArtNow Pakistan and the Karachi Biennale Trust.

As history indicates, human mythologies, language, and aesthetics are shaped by our connections and interactions with the animal kingdom. Over the centuries, the animal presence in visual culture demonstrates the dynamic relations between man and beast, which exist in perpetual modes of flux, simultaneously forming and disintegrating with the passage of time. As urbanization removes the animal from quotidian reality, the natural world destructively shifts further into a sphere of novelty and wonder. Zoos and circuses flourish, profiting from the boundaries they construct between animals and the human world. Exhilaration and applause sanctions a perversion against nature, ill-mannered surveillance, and the fracturing of migratory journeys.

With focus on the natural human phenomenon to seek, and long for what isn't in our belonging, Rabia investigates the wishful realm of desire that forms the undertones of mankind's complex relationship with animals. Nostalgic dreams of flight and birdsong, the iridescence of feathers, the secrets of fluff and flesh, prompt a desperation to mimic, consume and possess.

Within imagined spaces, where the politics of deceit, imitation, memory, and magic come into play, Rabia's oeuvre navigates an inimical coexistence. Instigated by folly, the winged, scaled, and multi-colored creatures that are yearned for, are paralyzed, as humankind infiltrates the non-human realm.

-Rabia S. Akhtar



Quiet Pathways to Eternity, 2021, Gouache on Wasli, 40 x 19 inches



Quiet Pathways to Eternity, 2021 (Detail)



Quiet Pathways to Eternity, 2021 (Detail)



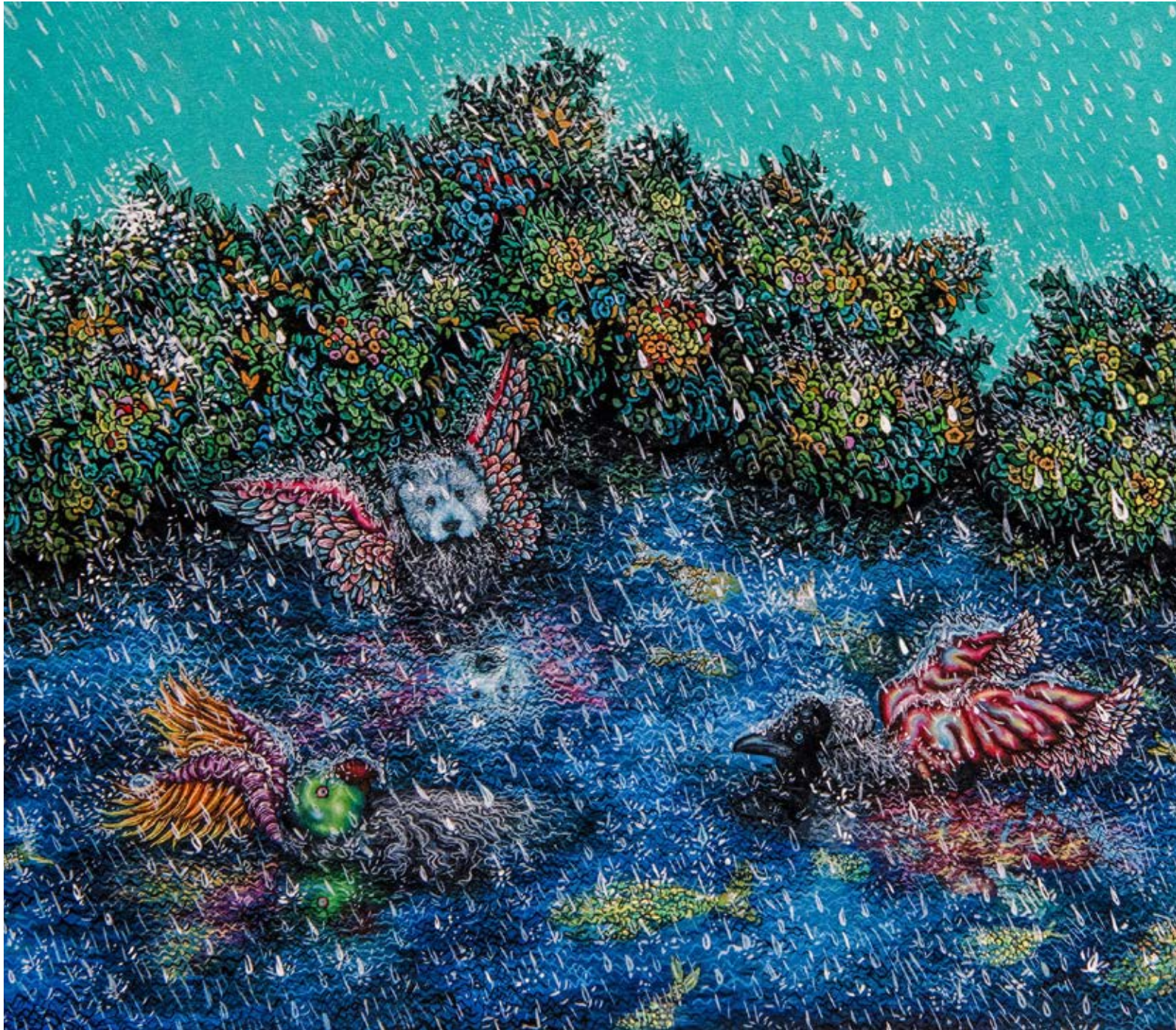
Quiet Pathways to Eternity, 2021 (Detail)



Quiet Pathways to Eternity, 2021 (Detail)



Passing Tempest, 2021, Gouache on Wasli, 12.5 x 13 inches



Passing Tempest, 2021 (Detail)



Chase and Silence, 2021, Gouache on Wasli, 21 x 26 inches



Chase and Silence, 2021 (Detail)



Chase and Silence, 2021 (Detail)



Chase and Silence, 2021 (Detail)



Chase and Silence, 2021 (Detail)



Crow Seeking Friendship I, 2021,
Gouache on Wasli, 6 x 6 inches



Crow Seeking Friendship II, 2021,
Gouache on Wasli, 6 x 6 inches



Crow Seeking Friendship III 2021,
Gouache on Wasli, 6 x 6 inches



GALLERY