

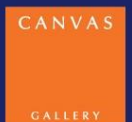
Exit the Tiger

Symbols of Valour in Tipu's India

ADEELA SULEMAN



Grosvenor
Gallery





**Exit the Tiger:
Symbols of Valour in Tipu's India**

2 – 25 October 2024

Grosvenor Gallery
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1.

Tipu bids farewell to his sons at the court of Mysore, 2024

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

Plate: 33.8 x 41.9 cm (13 1/4 x 16 1/2 in)

Framed: 67 x 59.5 x 6 cm (26 3/8 x 23 3/8 x 2 3/8 in)

£ 13,000.00

*Tipu's sons bidding farewell to ladies in the zenana
(the private inner rooms of a house - it is the Indian subcontinent's
equivalent of the harem)*





2.

Haider Ali and Tipu witness the Qamargah hunt, 2023-24

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

39.9 x 49.8 cm

15 3/4 x 19 5/8 in

Plate: 39.9 x 49.8 cm (15 3/4 x 19 5/8 in)

Framed: 72 x 82 x 16 cm (28 3/8 x 32 1/4 x 6 1/4 in)

£ 13,000.00



Qamargah:

The Mughal Emperors used hunting or shikar as a royal privilege, to exercise authority over their subjects and the natural world. The thrill of the hunt provided an adrenaline rush that had the emperors hooked. Apart from casting themselves as heroes who could slay the fiercest of beasts, they believed that by hunting, they were destroying the forces of evil that surrounded them.

The majestic, big cats – tigers and lions- were especially challenging to Hunt and were therefore their most valuable quarry. The Mughals also believed that killing a lion or Tiger was a lucky omen. If the lion escaped during the hunt, trouble would befall the Empire.

The Mongol Tradition of hunting was about bringing out the warrior in an Emperor. Qamargah was a battle plan. Hundreds of men were employed as beaters, whose job was to trap the animal in a circle and lead it to an area encircled by nets or fences. Once trapped, the animal is then forced to Succumb to the authority of the emperor.

The lions and tigers have been removed from the composition and instead positioned between the men is young Tipu and his father, Haider Ali witnessing the royal hunt.





3.

Tipu's sons bid farewell at the zenana harem, 2024

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

Plate: 33.8 x 41.9 cm (13 1/4 x 16 1/2 in)

Framed: 63 x 62 x 5.5 cm (24 3/4 x 24 3/8 x 2 1/8 in)

£ 13,000.00



4.

On the plains of Pollilur 1784, 2023-24

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

34.3 x 48.3 cm

13 1/2 x 19 in

Plate: 34.3 x 48.3 x (13 1/2 x 19 in)

Framed: 65 x 80 x 16 cm (25 5/8 x 31 1/2 x 6 1/4 in)

£ 13,000.00

Mysore war – Pollilur- Scenes from the battle were first commissioned by Tipu himself in 1784. They were painted on the walls and frescoes of his palace - Daria Daulat Bagh - in Seringapatam, then the capital of Mysore in southern India.







5.

Tipu- Exit the Tiger, 2023-24

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

43.2 x 31.8 cm

17 x 12 1/2 in

Plate: 43.2 x 31.8 cm (17 x 12 1/2 in)

Framed: 75 x 62 x 15 cm (29 1/2 x 24 3/8 x 5 7/8 in)

£ 15,000.00



6.

Tipu's body is discovered by Sir David Baird in the ruins of Seringapatam in 1799, 2024

Found vintage ceramic plate, hand painted with enamel paint and lacquer

Plate: 54.6 x 41.9 cm (21 1/2 x 16 1/2 in)

Framed: 77 x 59 x 12 cm (30 1/4 x 23 1/4 x 4 3/4 in)

£ 15,000.00



The Painting referenced in this work was painted by Sir David Wilkie (1785 - 1841) in 1839. This enormous picture was commissioned after Sir David Baird's death by his wife, Lady Baird, as a private memorial. It took four years to complete, and for Baird's posthumous likeness, Wilkie turned to a sculpture by the Scottish artist, Laurence Macdonald. (NG 2719). Baird had been in India with the British Army in 1779, when he was taken prisoner by Haidar 'Ali, the ruler of the Mysore Kingdom.

Imprisoned for four years, Baird was only released after the signing of the treaty of Mangalore. He remained in the army, engaging Haidar 'Ali's son, Tipu Sultan (Tippoo Saib), during the Third and Fourth Anglo-Mysore Wars. The latter conflict ceased in 1799 when Tipu was killed as his stronghold of Seringapatam was stormed after a month-long siege. Wilkie portrays Baird at the decisive moment Tipu's body was discovered.





7.

Honouring Tipu: Allegorical battle standard, 2024

Carved wood, wood polish, emulsion, oil paint, gold leaf and lacquer

152.4 x 106.7 cm

60 x 42 in

£ 18,000.00





8.

Remembering Tipu: An allegorical tribute to Tipu's last standard at Seringapatam, 2024

Carved wood, wood polish, emulsion, oil paint, gold leaf and lacquer

203.2 x 104.1 cm

80 x 41 in

£ 18,000.00



9.

Honouring Tipu: Mahi Maratib battle standard, 2024

Brass dust, cast resin, oil and gold leaf

Head: 50.8 x 63.5 x 59.7 cm (20 x 25 x 23 1/2 in) each

With stand: 162 x 50 x 64 cm (63 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 25 1/4) in each

(Sold as a pair)

£ 12,000.00

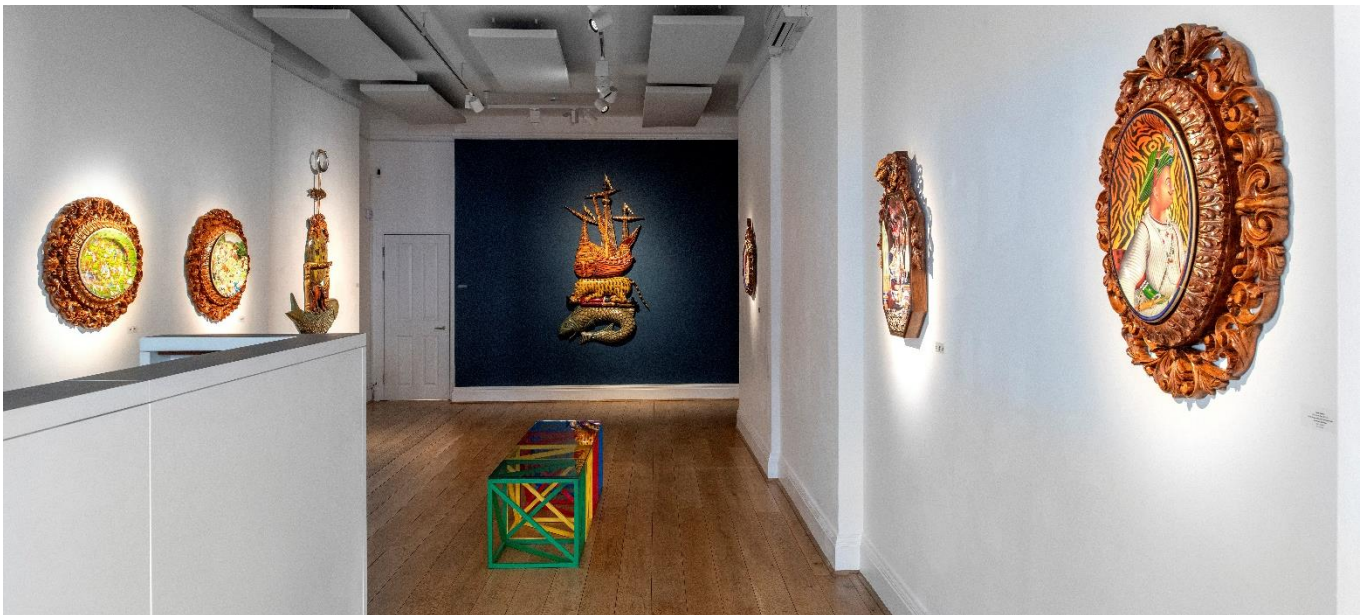


The Mahi Maratib is noted as being the chief insignia awarded by the Mughal Emperor to give recognition to important allied rulers, those who could bring 6000 mounted soldiers with them when they joined the emperor on campaign. It was carried in procession ahead of the ruler, flanked by two discs or spheres with which it was associated. The fish body behind the head is now invariably made of red cloth, streaming out behind.

Art, Historiography and Resistance in Adeela Suleman's *Exit the Tiger*: A Comment by Hameed Haroon

Why Tipu Sultan? And why has Pakistani artist Adeela Suleman been inspired to recreate episodes from the life of Tipu, boldly supplemented with an array of battle standards and societal tributes that evoke Tipu's valour? And what, indeed, does valour mean in the context of Adeela Suleman's art?

Since Tipu Sultan's heroic death at his capital Seringapatam, in 1799, the legends that have grown around his personality have evoked sharply polarized and differing opinions. For the British colonial administration, Tipu was a major obstacle in their effort to establish control of the Deccan peninsula during the late 18th century. He also proved himself to be somewhat of a nuisance with respect to his diplomatically adroit flirtation with the rivals of the British the French East India Company, headquartered in nearby Pondicherry. And last but not least, Tipu started a vigorous diplomatic correspondence with the legendary French consul in Paris—Napoleon Bonaparte—to drive the British East India company out of India during the period of the Anglo-French wars, that were raging over three continents—a correspondence that reduced him in the eyes of the British to the status of a “treasonous Indian.” Precisely, what treason? And against whom? A mere trading company, subscribed to by venture capital investors from the London market in the 17th century, that had recruited British soldiers and native sepoy as mercenaries—Blackwater style—a means to facilitating healthy dividends to wealthy merchant back in Britain? This palpable evidence of ‘treason’ was triumphantly brandished by the Governor General's office in Calcutta and identified as having been seized from the smouldering ruins of Tipu's royal archive at his capital in Seringapatam. Treason, indeed!



Next, we turn towards the second question: why has Pakistani artist, Suleman, 250 years later, and residing in Karachi at a distance of over 2000 miles from Tipu's capital, taken up the strands of Tipu's life so rigorously and made it the focus of her latest exhibition? The answer to this question lies partially in the controversy that was fuelled after Tipu's death (even the colonial army senior officers described Tipu as a 'worthwhile opponent'). As long as colonial administrators zealously guarded the documents in archives at the Governor General's headquarters in Calcutta, and as long as such documents at the India Office in London remained closed to most potential Indian researchers (British colonial historians of the period repeatedly stressed that history was 'not a fit subject' for Indian historians), the research underlying Tipu Sultan's wars with the British remained free from critical examination. Instead, a

bluntly partisan and jaundiced views on Tipu's role against British colonialism emerged in British historiography. Tipu's role was thus confined to being celebrated in Indian popular folklore till the early 20th century, when a nascent Indian nationalism in the guise of Indian historiography took to supporting Tipu Sultan—in this instance in the case of both Hindu and Muslim nationalist history-tellers. It would also be useful to point out that the pre-1947 consensus of nationalist historians in South Asia has since evaporated somewhat, and today Indian nationalist historians under the pressure of a relentless Hindutva, tend to distance themselves from openly endorsing the relevance of Tipu Sultan's struggle. Nevertheless, for secular Indians as also for nationalist historians on the Pakistani flank, Tipu remains a revered figure, whose unbridled antagonism to colonization emerged a full six decades before the Mutiny. There is little doubt that Suleman, while growing up in Karachi, was fascinated with the valorous legends of Tipu's last stand at Seringapatam, and that has allowed her to align the nationalist view on Tipu these with her own concerns.



Now, to turn our attention to the third question, what does valor mean in the context of Adeela Suleman's art? Artist Suleman's view of Tipu as an anti-colonial warrior fighting injustice is closely linked to the plight of her fellow citizens in Karachi in the 1990s, who strongly attempted to resist the anarchic violence inflicted on them by the agencies of state and political extremists. In Suleman's mind the violence of the Pakistani state in her hometown is closely identified with the oppression of 19th-century Indians perpetrated by British and European colonial powers while consolidating their stranglehold over the early premodern kingdoms of the Indian subcontinent. In a move to examine the distant origins of the violence of in her hometown, Adeela avidly mined the early history of violence in Islamic history, particularly under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, as well as the under the Mughal and Qajar dynasties in the medieval period, mainly to explore their deployment of arbitrary and unjust state power against ordinary citizens.

Logically, after completing her examination of the origins of violence in early Islamic statecraft, Suleman has turned towards the colonization of the Indian subcontinent in the 17th to 19th centuries. Her recent wall mural in intricate metal repousse relief- *Armadas, Blood & Jesuits on the Portuguese Spice Route to India*, was unveiled earlier this year at the Mude Museum in Lisbon and clearly demonstrates her preoccupation with the savagery perpetrated by the Portuguese armadas in the Indian Ocean on the residents of the 'Spice' kingdoms along the western Indian coastline. The persecution led by the Jesuits and the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa, Surat, and Calicut casts long shadows across her visual narrative in this magnificent mural.

Her next work, a large applique tapestry to be exhibited at the Glynn Vivian Gallery in Swansea in May 2025, attempts to explore the relationship between British-induced opium farming in eastern India; gunboat diplomacy in the South China Sea to force opium consumption and addiction in imperial China; and the use of Britain's opium trading vessels to cash in on the lucrative trade of selling African slaves to the America. Clearly, British colonial power had outstripped the Portuguese in its disregard for fundamental human rights.



Following these developments, in her career, Suleman turned her attention to her new artworks comprising the exhibition *Exit the Tiger: Symbols of Valour in Tipu's India*, currently on display at the Grosvenor Gallery, London. Tipu's valour in this context, clearly implies a concerted resistance to injustice. In Suleman's belief, the ability to resist injustice is a primary act of valour, that merits the unveiling of laudatory and emotionally arousing art works by an artist such as herself, represented at the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition by the finely executed battle standards to honour the memory of Tipu Sultan. Suleman's use of the highest-ranking Mughal award for bravery—the *Mahi Maratib* (the Order of the Fish) is a veritable red badge of honor conferred by the artist on Tipu for his unwavering resistance to colonialism. Suleman is known in her hometown of Karachi as one of the foremost Pakistani advocates in art circles for social resistance, and she has entwined this historical strain with a deeply felt anticolonialism. In brief, resistance to injustice, conjoined with valour, has made Tipu Sultan the recipient of the artist's highest accolades in the course of her art over the last two decades. So, it is clear why valour is of significance within the artist's vision.

Which brings us the final question with respect to the visual sources deployed by the artist in her created images for *Exit the Tiger*. In the last decade, in Adeela's earlier works, the use of imperial Mughal miniatures provides the basic framework of reference in the detailed and meticulous depictions of Mughal India that the artist conceived through the medium of metal work, found porcelain platters, and large applique tapestries. The process she underwent in no way implies the 'borrowing' of images indiscriminately by the artist, but instead assumes the form of a reworked inspiration with strong doses of creative detail entirely individual to her sensibilities. The motive behind Suleman's efforts in this matter, is to promote the historical authenticity and enhanced credibility of the images associated with the period she was depicting. *Exit the Tiger* marks a departure from the visual inspiration derived from imperial Mughal miniatures, since by the late 18th century, in the period of the Anglo-Mysore Wars, such miniatures were no longer being created in ample quantities. Suleman, instead relies upon the

paintings of British military artists who travelled to India; the voluminous paintings of the Company School patronized by the colonial administrators in India that mushroomed in various Indian regional centers in the 19th century; and finally, the work of British printmakers that she relies upon to piece together authentic fragments of detail in the military campaigns related to the Anglo-Mysore wars. Suleman continues however, to deploy the same essential mediums as in earlier examinations as the origins of violence; she uses painted visual surfaces in her art works in *Exit the Tiger*, lovingly brushed on to 19th century found antique porcelain platters and she adorns them with individually creative and fine authentic painting surfaces to distinguish them from her visual source material.

Adeela Suleman has secured her place in Pakistani art as one of the leading artists in the region. Her unique contribution to the supplementing of a more indigenous and relevant art education for artists and in creating opportunities for art training began with her establishing an arts and craft kaarkhana (workshop) in a working-class neighborhood in Karachi. This atelier has assembled artisan teams proficient in the medium of traditional and influential in the production of 19th century decorative arts. Suleman remains a model example for emulation for younger emerging artists, who look towards tradition as a source of inspiration. Her long-term stewardship of the Vasl Artists' Association in Karachi enables both new and mature artists to apply for residencies and project grants to research new directions in their art. The themes of state violence, colonial repression and a resistance to injustice are mirrored in Suleman's work, which demonstrate a deep respect for human and civil rights. It is perhaps this remarkable trait which led the authorities in Pakistan to ban the exhibition of her work in the Karachi Biennale in 2019, leading to the destruction of art works in the form of funerary monuments, that commemorated the lives of 444 unidentified victims of both police encounters and police brutality in Karachi during that period.

Hameed Haroon

October 2024

Suggested readings:

Adeela Suleman, *Not Everyone's Heaven*, by Rosa Maria Falvo, Skira 2020

Art violence and the State in the Killing Fields of Karachi, by Adeela Suleman & Mariam Ali Baig, Topical 2022

About Hameed Haroon: Hameed Haroon was the Chief Executive Officer of the Dawn Media Group (DMG), Pakistan's leading media conglomerate. Hameed Haroon has played a major role in the in the promotion of culture, music and arts, and the conservation of archaeological heritage. He is the managing trustee of the Mohatta Palace Gallery Trust. He has co-curated *The Holy Sinner* – a major retrospective of the non-calligraphic works of Sadequain, Pakistan's well-known prolific artist. In 2004, he curated another spectacular exhibition entitled "Jewel in the Crown - Karachi under the Raj 1843-1947" which received over three quarter of a million visitors. In 2006 the President of Italy conferred on him the Italian Order of Merit as one of the "most outstanding public personalities in Pakistan". In 2024, he was the first recipient of the Beaconhouse National University (BNU)'s Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design (SVAD) *Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts* for his services in the fields of art and culture.



Adeela Suleman received her BFA from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi in 1999 and her MA in International Relations from Karachi University in 1995. Suleman was the Head of Fine Art Department at The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan from 2008-2019. She is the founding member and director of *Vasl Artists' Association* Karachi, Pakistan, founding member & director of *Odd Bird Art*, Singapore, Karachi, and founding member and director of *Suleman Annual Grant for Arts – SAGA*, Karachi, Pakistan

Suleman has exhibited in numerous solo exhibitions including those Midlands Arts Center, Birmingham, UK (2022); Sullivan+ Strumpf, Singapore (2019); Aicon Gallery, New York, USA (2017); Gandhara Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan (2017); Davide Gallo Gallery, Milan, Italy (2017); Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan (2015); Aicon Gallery, New York, USA (2014); Canvas, Karachi, Pakistan (2012); Alberto Peola Gallery, Torino, Italy (2012); Aicon Gallery, London, UK (2011); Rohtas Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan (2008).

She has taken part in group exhibitions at notable Museums and foundations and her works are part of notable international public collections. Suleman has also participated in the Lisbon Jewelry Biennale, Portugal (2024); Art Basel Hong Kong (2024); Busan Biennale, South Korea (2022); Karachi Biennale, Pakistan (2017 and 2019); Singapore Biennale (2016); Asian Art Biennial, Taichung, Taiwan (2013); SEA+ Triennial, Jakarta, Indonesia (2013); Asia Triennial II, Manchester, UK (2011); 2nd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial, Fukuoka, Japan (2002). Her work has been shown numerous times at , Art Dubai, Abu Dhabi Art Fair , India Art Fair and At Armory, New York and Art Basel Hongkong.

Her work has been reviewed by several magazines, catalogues and newspapers such as Art Forum, BOMB Magazine, Wall Street International, New York Times, Publications, Art Radar Asia, Art Link Magazine and Art Asia Pacific.

Suleman's Monograph "*Not everyone's Heaven*" was printed by Skira in 2020. Her second book "*Art, Violence and the State in the Killing Fields of Karachi*" was recently published and co-authored by Mariam Ali Baig in 2022. Suleman lives and works in Karachi, Pakistan.

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