



SUNNAT BIRDS

NEW WORK BY FAIZA BUTT

Grosvenor
Gallery



SUPER NATURAL

New works by Faiza Butt

8 – 20 OCTOBER 2021

**Grosvenor
Gallery**

35 Bury Street
London SW1Y 6AU

+44(0) 20 7484 7979
art@grosvenorgallery.com



SUPER NATURAL

By Justine Ludwig

Just now the world is emerging from a long period of isolation. Removed from so much of the stimuli we had become accustomed to, those privileged with internet access found themselves stuck in the endless scroll. This glut of unsolicited input—ranging from the banal to the consumerist to the political—conveniently packages itself in a two-dimensional form, unmediated and often unproven. We remain caught in the web, a captive audience to our own undoing.

For years we succumbed to the seduction of the immediate: the snapshot, the next day delivery, the one stop shop. The pandemic instilled in us the freedom of having nowhere to be and nowhere to go. In short, we had time. Super-natural, a presentation of Faiza Butt's latest work, is a result of this condition. Suddenly faced with an abundance of space for pause and reflection, Butt explored what initially called her to be an artist. Working in oil paint and ceramic, Butt embodies a classic vision of the archetypal artist—aiming to represent the world as we know it in exacting detail.

Left
Grosvenor Gallery

Butt came up during an artistic moment that believed that painting was experiencing its death knells—the accessibility of the camera made the laborious representational role of paint and canvas appear wholly unnecessary. Why paint, when you can simply point and click? For Butt, her return to painting is an act of rebellion even as she works from photographs, translating the pixel to brushstroke.

Super-natural is a departure for Butt whose past work is dominated by representational ink drawings on mylar, rendered through painstaking repetitive dots, referencing both the *par dokht* technique of miniaturist painting and the digital noise of computer images. These drawings were built on hybrid visuals where popstars and pastries comingled with nationalist symbols and National Geographic documentary photography. Bomb blasts and fireworks were commonly, and intentionally, conflated. In contrast, her latest work, meticulously produced in oil paint and ceramic, draws from her immediate surroundings rather than pop culture and the geo-political.



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Butt's children are often the subjects of her work (as she says, "it is the subject I know best"). They have been making appearances throughout her oeuvre since they were children and now, on the precipice of adulthood, they take center stage. Butt was inspired by the paintings of James Abbott McNeill Whistler and George Hendrik Breitner, in which young European beauties were painted reclining in Japanese kimonos. These artists took inspiration from Japanese prints that emphasized the ornate patterns and luxurious fabrics of Japanese fashion. In Butt's oil paintings, her daughter Layla is cast in a role similar to the muses of Whistler and Breitner. Lushly attired, Layla is framed by the interiors she grew up in, here dressed in the chinoiserie furnishing and florals of past European taste. The timeless illusion dissolves due to the presence of contemporary technology. Layla's inky black mobile screen serves as a portal to the world beyond the walls of the family home. The paintings capture a wanderlust while visualizing Butt's own cultural hybridity, and that of her children. According to Butt, "I am particularly drawn to period images of Western women dressed in kimonos and surrounded by blue and white china. The very act of adopting another cultural identity as an escape from one's own reality remains a relatable arena for me as an artist."

In her own life, Butt is defined by the multicultural—having studied at the National College of Art in Lahore, Pakistan, and the Slade School of Fine Art in London, England. She finds a magnetism in the exotic as it is manifested in European observation of the East through a lens of fantasy. Tensions and binaries have always served as fodder for Butt. Time and space collapse in her work, born of hybridity and contradiction.

Far left
Super Natural

Left
Layla on Instagram

This pastiche of appropriation (or appropriation of appropriation) is most prevalent in her ceramic works, upon which signifiers of different cultures from disparate time periods amalgamate amongst the cosmos. This medium is a fitting site for depicting the global as ceramic traditions from around the globe were deeply influenced through trade routes. Dutch Delftware, referenced in Butt's pieces, was inspired directly by blue and white Chinese porcelain that flooded regional markets thanks to the Dutch East India Company. Butt's ceramics are graphic and playful in contrast to the formality of her oil paintings.

The show culminates in its titular painting Super-natural. The work presents a utopic vision in which a menagerie of birds from radically different contexts and climates effortlessly coexist. In the distance we see Quaid-e-Azam Library in Lahore, whose neo-classical architecture echoes buildings found throughout Europe and the United States. Butt grew up playing in the shadows of this building and it continues to loom large in her memory. In the foreground we see pieces of rubbish, a discarded bag of Walker crisps and a can of Coca-Cola—the only clues to a recent human presence and symbols of human disregard. The painting is a lovingly rendered escape into memory and imagination. Not so far removed from the portal of our smart phones that now serve as extended repositories for recollection and miscellanea.

Right
Behind the Forever Beautiful

Butt's new work is the result of a pivotal moment in history that we shared in experience. It also is a reminder of how the conditions of 2020 and 2021 are not contained, but rather a heightened version of our contemporary reality. The same technologies that bring us together and allow us to connect around the globe, also isolate us. Butt offers human intimacy, the natural world, and imagination as counterpoint.

Justine Ludwig, 2021



I. Super Natural, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt/ 2021' lower right
Oil on board
164 x 134 cm
64 5/8 x 52 3/4 in





Preparatory sketches for Super Natural





2. *Glencoe House*, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt / 2021' lower right

Oil on board

78 x 47 cm

30 3/4 x 18 1/2 in



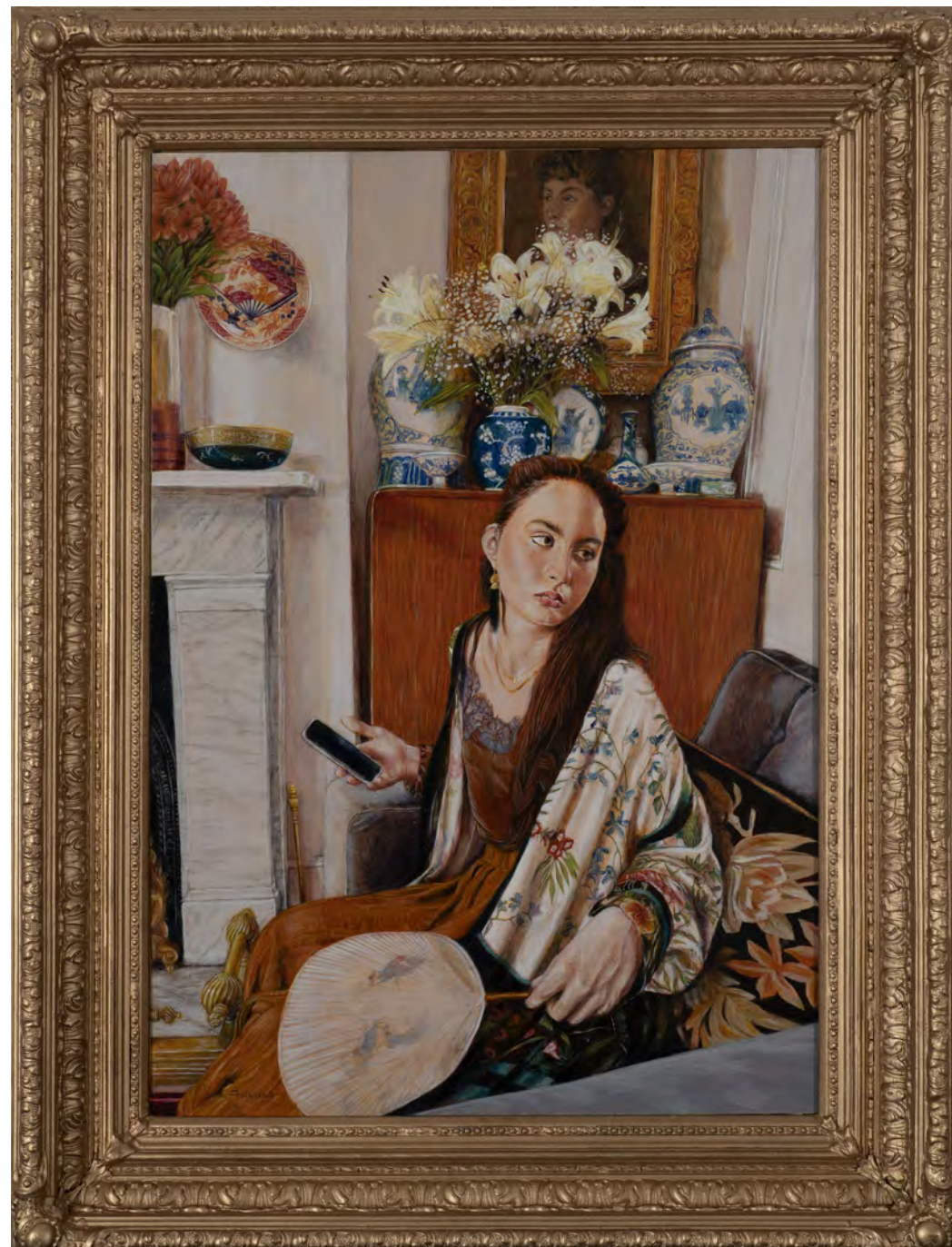
3. *Layla on Instagram, 2021*

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt / 2021' lower left

Oil on board

66.2 x 46 cm

26 1/8 x 18 1/8 in



4. *Layla watching Super Natural, 2021*

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt/ 2021' lower right

Oil on board

75.9 x 49.5 cm

29 7/8 x 19 1/2 in





5. Layla Listening to You Tube, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt/ 2021' lower right

Oil on board

38 x 54 cm

15 x 21 1/4 in



6. Zack Watching You Tube, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt/ 2021' lower left

Oil on board

35 x 54 cm

13 3/4 x 21 1/4 in



7. Zack on Spotify, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt / 2021' lower right

Oil on board

44.5 x 26 cm

17 1/2 x 10 1/4 in



8. Zack on Soundcloud, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt / 2021' lower right

Oil on board

36.4 x 25.5 cm

14 3/8 x 10 1/8 in





9. Supernatural-I, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt / 2021'

Oil on board

29.2 x 17.5 cm

11 1/2 x 6 7/8 in



10. The Stagnant Memory, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt 2021' on the bottom

Ceramic

Height: 16 cm (6 1/4 in)

Diameter: 33.5 cm (13 in)





11. Behind the Forever Beautiful, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt 2021' on the bottom

Ceramic

Height: 17.5 cm (6 7/8 in)

Diameter: 33 cm (12 7/8 in)





12. Cornucopia-1, 2021

Signed and dated 'Faiza Butt 2021' on
the bottom

Ceramic

Height: 17 cm (6 3/4 in)

Diameter: 33 cm (12 7/8)







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Photography
Justin Piperger

Design
Been Up To Much

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