

**RHYTHMIC
MEASURES**

**ELISABETH
DEANE**

**29 November –
20 December 2019**

**Grosvenor
Gallery**

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night
and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic
measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust
of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks
into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle
of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this
world of life.

And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing
in my blood this moment.

– Rabindranath Tagore
Gitanjali (Song Offerings)

INTRODUCTION

The title of Elisabeth Deane's show 'Rhythmic Measures' is a phrase taken from the second line of Rabindranath Tagore's poem 'The Stream of Life'. Elisabeth's geometry paintings are an expression of the harmonious and 'rhythmic measures' that are observable all around us in nature – bestowing, as the Qur'an says, the 'eyes to see' or, to paraphrase Socrates, our inner eye: more worthy than a thousand outer eyes.

Elisabeth's work, which is grounded in her practice and learning at The Prince's School, has been inspired by both the rhythm and discipline in the geometry of nature: not just nature's beautifully balanced physical design, but also its internal mystical essence. What is it about these extraordinary patterns that are found in the tiniest cell and the most magnificent trees that moves many of us, not just painters and visual artists, to wonder and joy?¹

Professor Keith Critchlow, the founder of The Prince's School, writes in his book *The Geometry of Flowers*, "Heraclitus said 'Nature loves to hide', which could also be interpreted as 'nature loves to hide her principles of existence.'"² It is likely that these 'principles of existence' were more accessible to humanity in ancient times. It was understood that the order and beauty of nature was a language that pointed to the eternal. Today, we need poets, musicians and artists – such as Elisabeth Deane – to remind us of this profound truth.

Elisabeth has honed her practical craft skills over many years, with patience and a contemplative nature, to re-create some of the patterns in the cosmos in her own particular way, thereby giving us a glimpse of what is hidden and what is timeless beneath nature's outer beauty. Her work – painstakingly executed with handmade brushes on handmade paper (or natural linen) and employing pigments she has ground herself – breathes new life into unchanging geometric principles. However, instead of embellishing the walls of mosques, madrasas and palaces, Elisabeth transfers the geometry to paintings, for example, *Emanator* and *Mount Noor*, and the miniature geometries such as *Diamond Weave*, which today may adorn – and give depth and brightness to – a contemporary home. Her colours are lush and exuberant and these, combined with the rigour and profound symbolism of geometry itself, capture the eye of the viewer and open his or her mind and heart to focus upon the higher truths within, serving as a reminder of Socrates's famous dictum 'Geometry is the Art of the Ever-True.'

Why are we so intrigued and drawn to these patterns in nature? What do they lead the soul towards? What is it that the artist is actually trying to 'bring out' – what indeed do these patterns mean? The answer, as Keith Critchlow reminds us, is profound: they are 'Ideas in the mind of God.'

Elisabeth's dedication to the beauty and truth of geometry is clearly expressed in her spectacular *Illuminated Carpet*, whose intricate pattern and subtle colours are absorbing and calming at the same time, and *The Seven Gates* – a glorious piece singing with natural pigments and gold leaf.

The Sun (Aten) radiates energy and light through the Italian gold leaf gilding, an image to be contemplated quietly, reminding us of another of Tagore's lines: 'The centre is still and silent in the heart of an eternal dance of circles'. This line also resounds in the black circle on a light blue ground, *Homage to S.H. Raza, a meditative, mandala-like image*.

Elisabeth is also interested in the capacity of the arts to build bridges between cultures, and her ability to re-interpret both traditional Islamic geometric patterns as well as miniature paintings – such as the uplifting *Kite ('Fly with faith')* and *My Persian Studio* – feels more important today than ever. There is a universality about her work that has the potential to educate through beauty, encouraging the viewer to further research and understanding.

'Therefore geometry, working with the aid of the imagination, is able to bring about recollection of the eternal ideas of the soul.' Algis Uzdavinys (summarizing Proclus in Euclid)

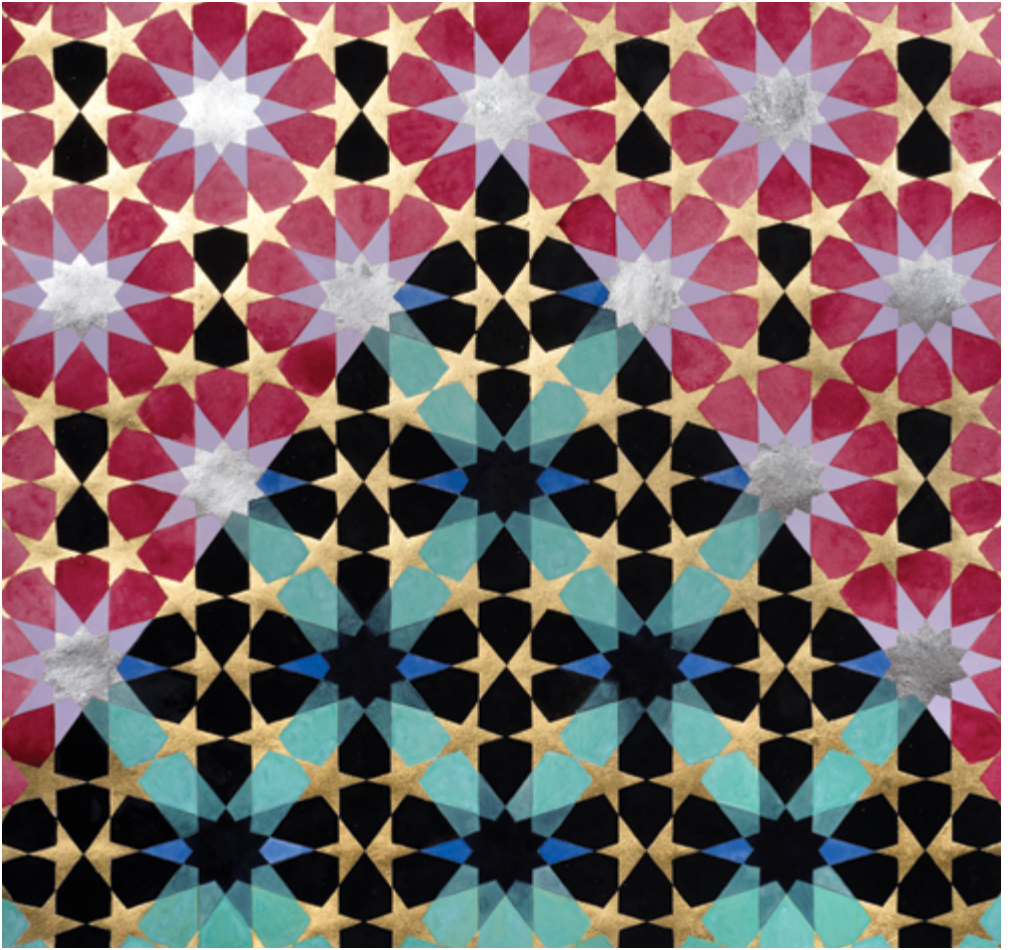
—Emma Clark

The Prince's Foundation, School of Traditional Arts

Notes

1. William Blake famously wrote "The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way."

2. P. 26

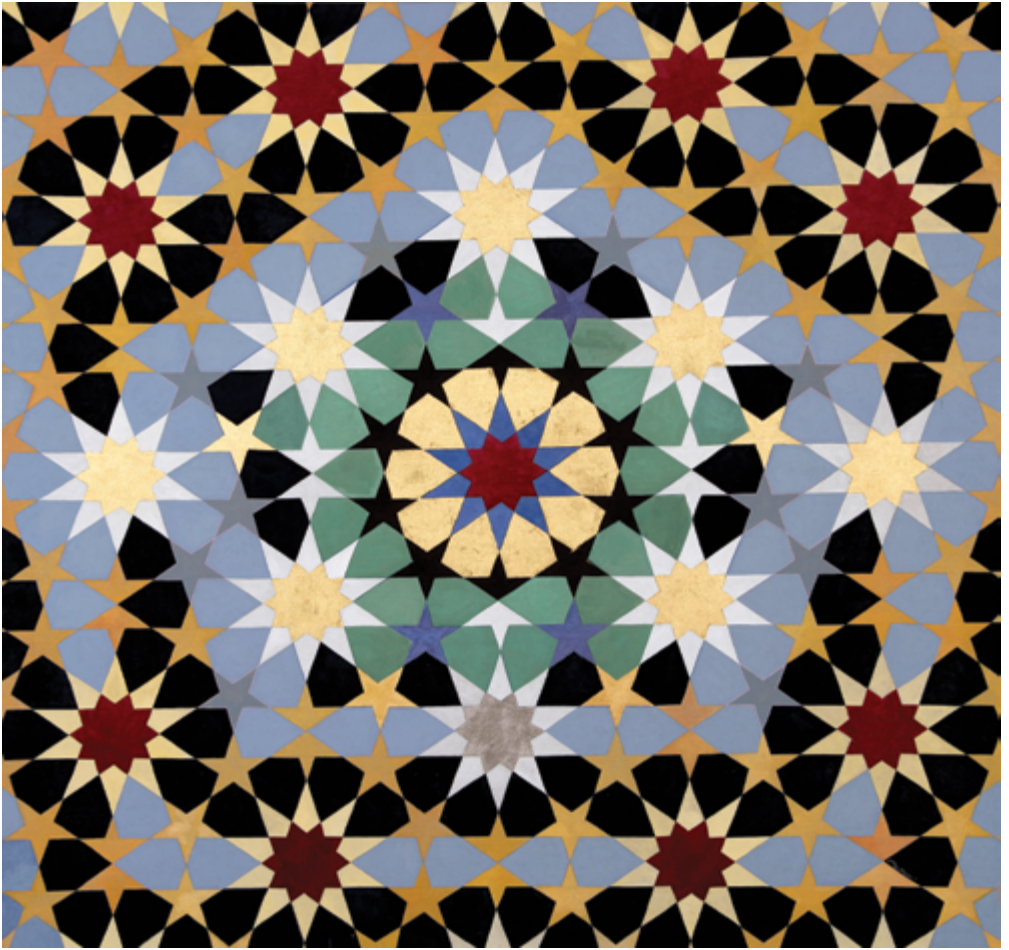


I.

Mount Noor
2019

Italian gold leaf,
palladium leaf and
natural pigments on linen

150 x 150 cm
59 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



2.

Auriga
2019

Italian gold leaf,
palladium leaf and
natural pigments on linen

150 x 150 cm
59 1/8 x 59 1/8 in



3.

The Sun (Aten)

2019

Italian gold leaf and
tempera on linen

180 x 180 cm

70 ⁷/₈ x 70 ⁷/₈ in

This piece is called Aten in reference to the disc of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology. Gold reflects light, and light is the radiant manifestation of energy.

'Even after all this time the sun never says to the Earth 'You owe me'. Look what happens with a love like that. It lights up the whole sky'.

— *Hafiz*



4.

Emanator
2019

Italian gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and
Arabic gum on handmade
Indian hemp paper

37 x 37 cm
14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ in

A magic carpet illuminated with gold diamonds and stars of palladium leaf is capable of whisking its owner away in the blink of an eye. I have lived alongside this painting for months, adding to it daily.

“Whoever sitteth on this carpet and willet in thought to be taken up and set down upon other site will, in the twinkling of an eye, be borne thither, be that place nearhand or distant many a day’s journey and difficult to reach.”

— *One Thousand and One Nights*

5.

The Illuminated Carpet
2019

Italian gold leaf, palladium leaf,
shell gold, natural pigments and
Arabic gum on handmade
Indian hemp paper

146 x 94 cm
57 ½ x 37 ¼ in



This painting is inspired by the myth of the ancient city of Ecbatana (715 BC) which is reputedly under modern day Hamadan in Iran. According to an account by Herodotus, the city had seven concentric walls, each a different colour, enclosing the palace within. Each wall represents a stage on the path of the hierarchy of spiritual growth – the gold in the center. This painting brings together the Bou Inania pattern (but with concentric diamonds instead of circles) and the colour combination from Ecbatana with the intention of producing a rhythmic, rippling effect.

6.

The Seven Gates

2019

Italian gold leaf, palladium leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Indian hemp paper

122,5 x 94 cm
48 ¼ x 37 ½ in



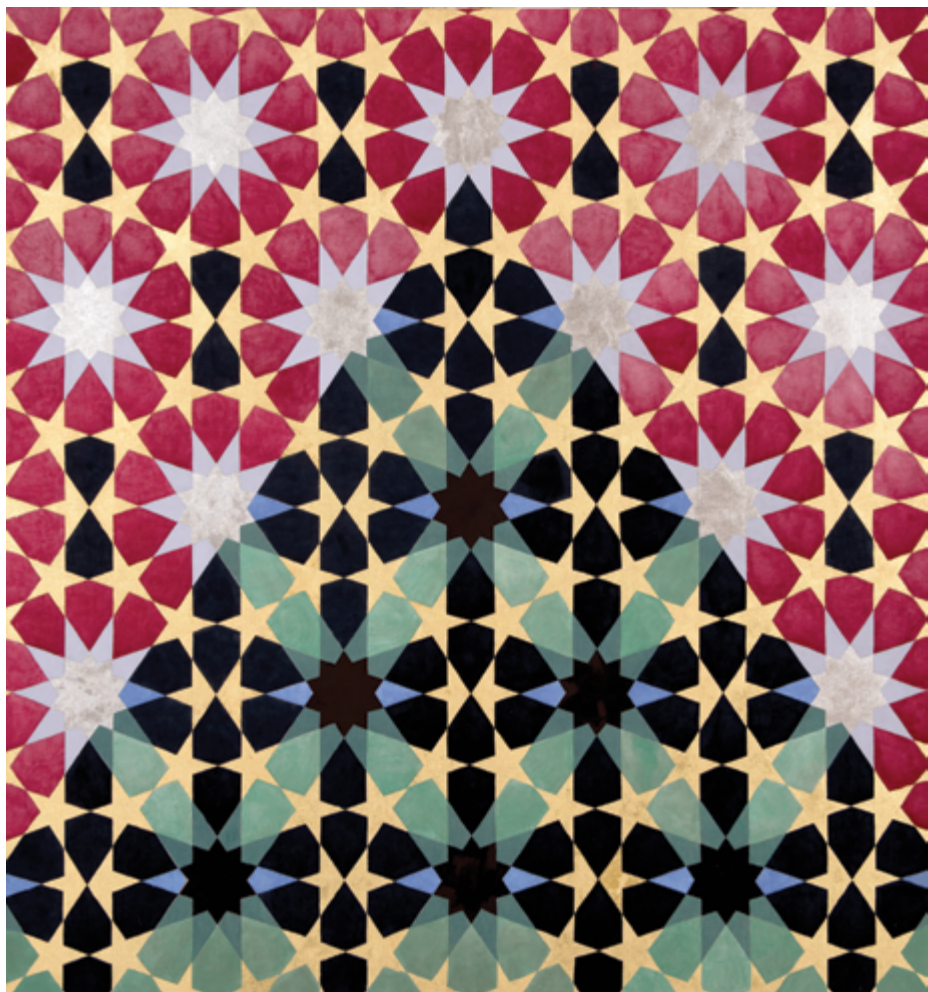


7.

Keralan Sun
2019

Gold leaf on handloom cloth (khadi)
sourced in Kerala, India

65 x 65 cm
25 ⁵/₈ x 25 ⁵/₈ in

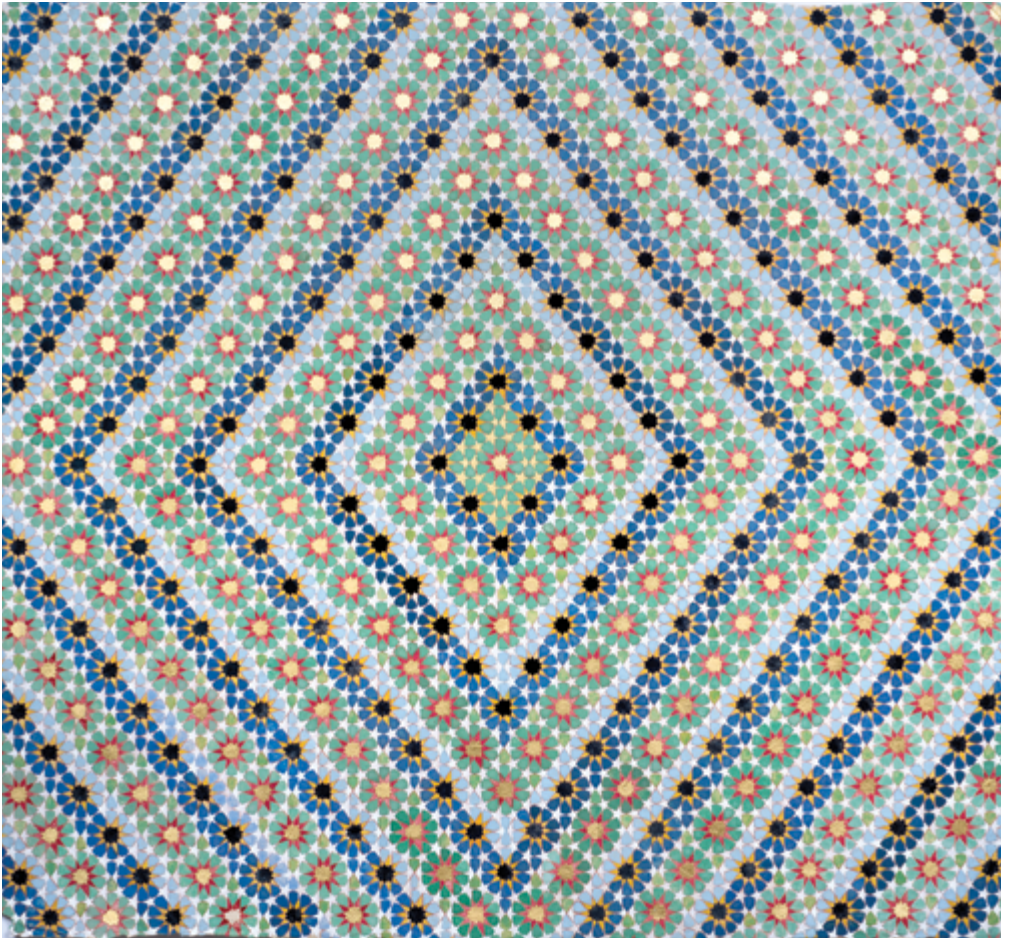


8.

Stars of Mount Noor
2019

Italian gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic
gum on handmade Indian
hemp paper

50 x 49.2 cm
19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

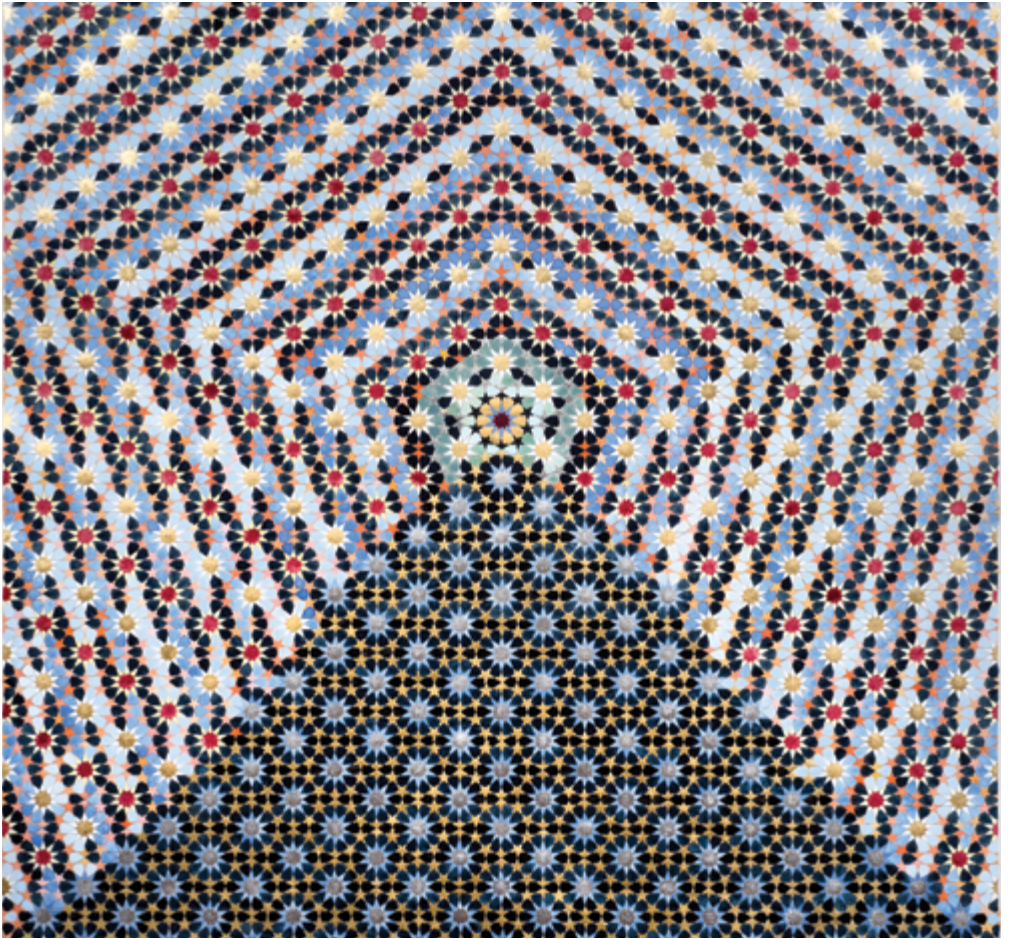


9.

Pulse
2019

Italian gold leaf, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on handmade
Indian hemp paper

50 x 51.5 cm
19 3/4 x 20 1/4 in



10.

2,040 Stars
2018

Italian gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Indian hemp paper
60 x 58 cm
23 ⁵/₈ x 22 ⁵/₈ in

My objective with this work was to use colour to create energy and vibrations that sing. I also had in mind that alchemy was concerned with the freeing of the human spirit, in addition to the transmutation of matter. This piece depicts the square, the circle and the triangle, each of which is symbolic: the circle represents infinity and the heavens; the square represents the earth and the four elements; and the triangle represents the union of the spiritual and physical worlds.

II.

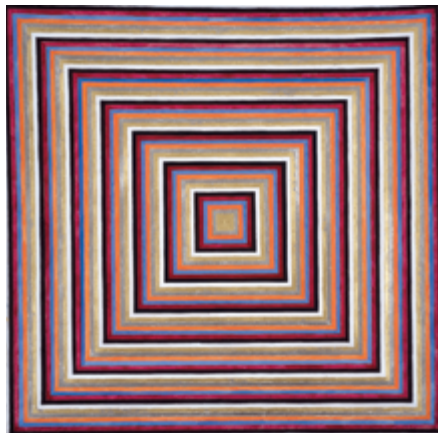
The Alchemist (Deconstructed)

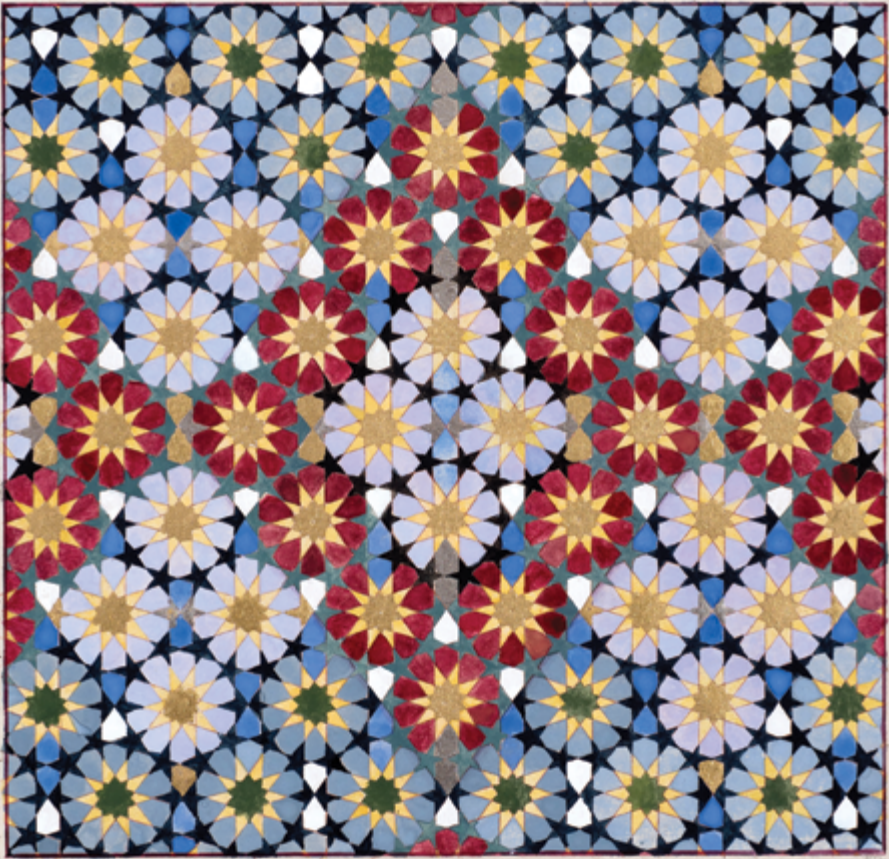
2019

Gold leaf, platinum and palladium leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic gum on
handmade Indian hemp paper

37 x 37 cm each

14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ in each





12.

Diamond Weave
2018

Gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic
gum on handmade Indian paper

19.7 x 20.3 cm
7 ¾ x 8 in

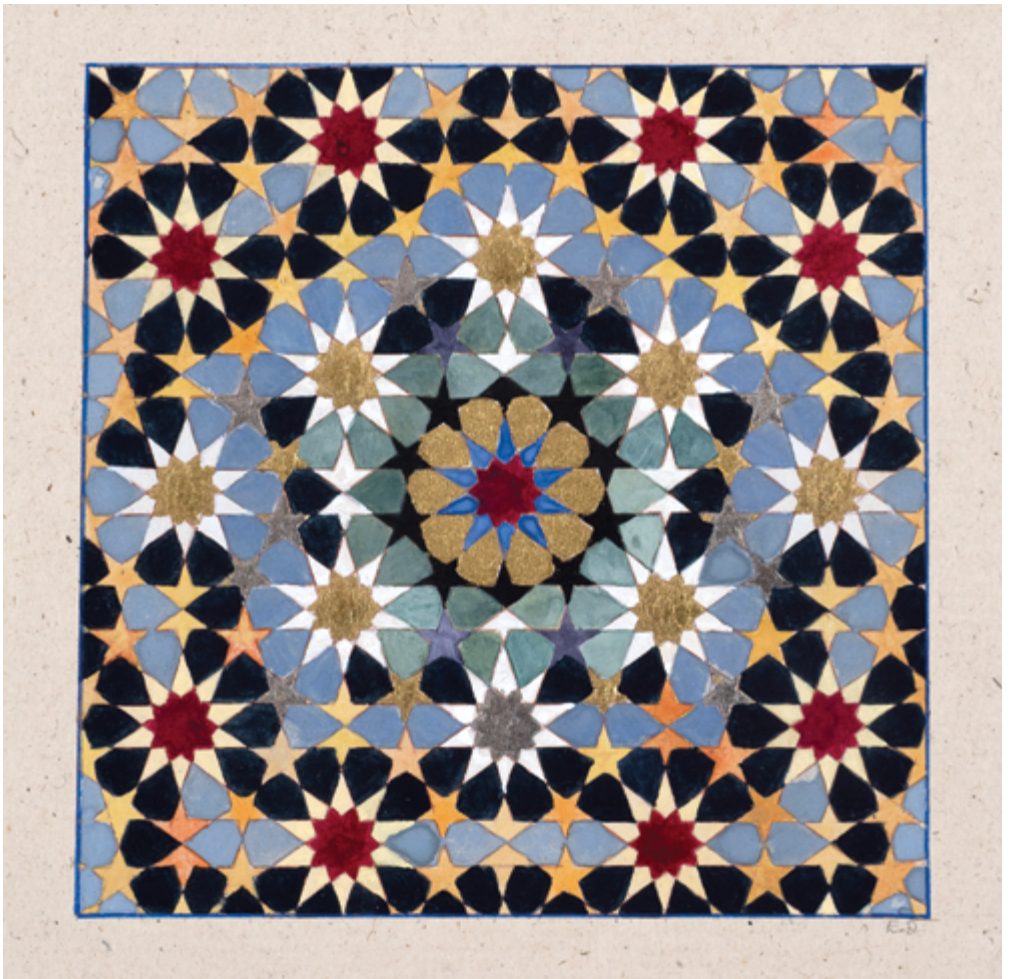


13.

Zillij Poem
2018

Gold leaf, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on antique
Indian paper

11.1 x 11.1 cm
4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in



14.

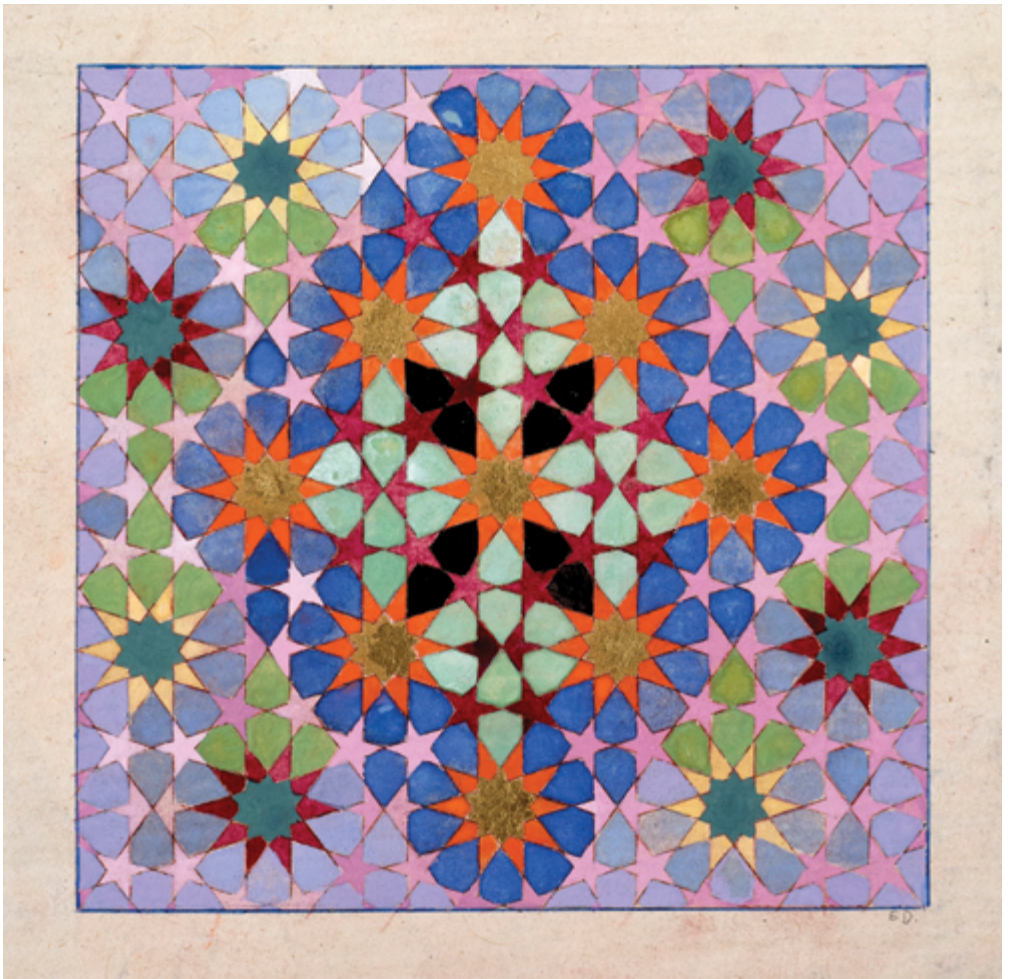
Pentagons

2018

Gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and Arabic
gum on antique Indian paper

11.1 x 11.1 cm

4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in



15.

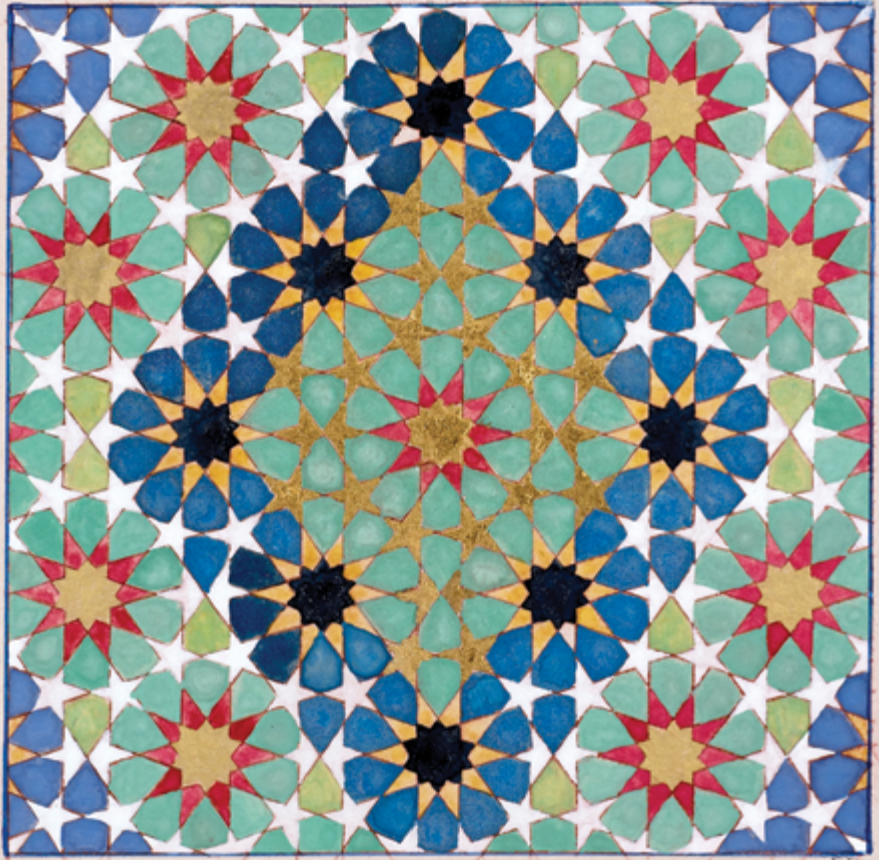
Diamond Cross Geometry

2019

Gold leaf, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on antique
Indian paper

11.1 x 11.1 cm

4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in



16.

Mini Carpet
2019

Gold leaf, shell gold,
platinum leaf, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on antique
Indian paper

11.1 x 11.1 cm
4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in



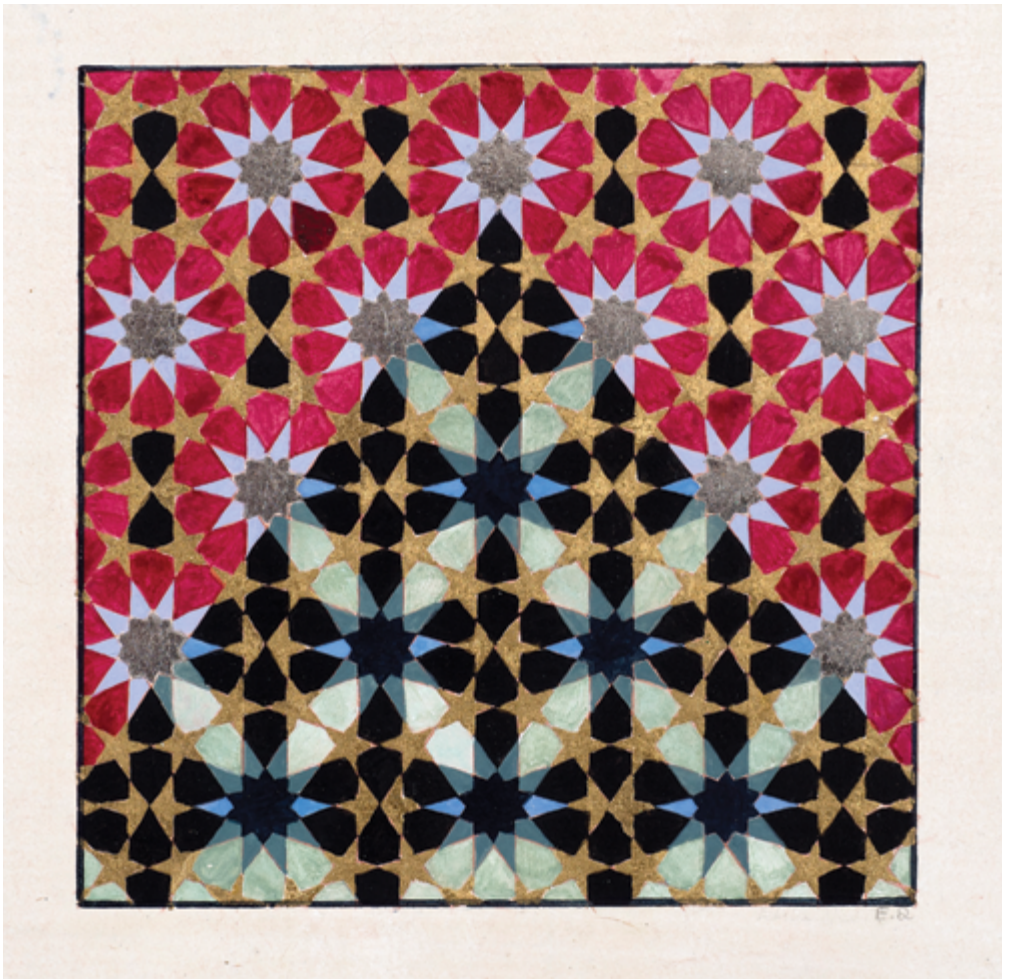
17.

Flower Circles

2019

Gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and
Arabic gum on antique
Indian paper

19 x 17 cm
7 ½ x 6 ¾ in



18.

Mountain Stars

2018

Gold leaf, platinum leaf,
natural pigments and
Arabic gum on antique
Indian paper

11.1 x 11.1 cm

4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in



19.

The Parakeet and the Cosmic Egg
2019

Natural pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Indian hemp paper

47.8 x 35.3 cm
18 7/8 x 13 7/8 in

This painting illustrates the Buddhist teaching 'The Blind Turtle and the Golden Yoke', a story to remind us that our human life is a rare and precious opportunity. The story goes that there is a blind turtle that lives under the sea and once every one hundred years he swims up to the surface of the ocean. On the surface of the ocean, a golden yoke is tossed around in the sea breeze. What are the chances of the turtle surfacing at just the right moment and in just the right place to be able to put its head through the yoke? Being born into a human embodiment allows us liberty, opportunity and intentional choice. This means we are able to reflect, access teachings on personal transformation and act. How lucky we are. Our human life is so precious. In my rendition of this story, 'the yoke' is a golden spiral – in the centre of a spiral is the calm core through which man passes to eternity.

20.

The Golden Yoke

2019

Shell gold, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on handmade
Indian hemp paper

54.3 x 33.1 cm
21 3/8 x 13 1/8 in

30



My Persian Studio

The background of this painting has been taken from the manuscript of Nizāmi's Khamsah (17TH century C.E). It is an illustration of one of his poems Haft Paykar. The Haft Paykar consists of seven tales. King Bahram builds a palace containing seven domes for his seven brides, each dedicated to one day of the week, governed by the day's planet and bearing its emblematic colour. The seven palaces and the seven domes can be seen here in my rendition.

Like this one, Persian miniatures tend to have sections of beautiful miniature geometries decorating the walls and floors. For me, what is so beautiful about these areas of geometric pattern is that they are so small they are painted by hand, which gives them 'wobble' – the perfect imperfection of the human hand – and they often contain gold dots and further elaborate decoration so that each shape is like a jewel.

It was painting this piece that initially gave me the idea for my miniature geometry series and also inspired me to use gold and platinum/palladium leaf alongside rich and beautiful colours. The original illuminated illustration inspired me so much it seemed appropriate to re-create the painting as my 'Persian studio'.

This piece is more personal and playful. I have depicted myself painting and, on each of the seven walls, miniature versions of my works. The unfinished geometry in the windows indicates that my creative process – inspired by tradition – is ongoing, like the painting within a painting. A fractal within a fractal.

21.

My Persian Studio

2019

Gold leaf, shell gold,
natural pigments and Arabic
gum on Fabriano paper

31.7 x 22.3 cm

12 ½ x 8 ¾ in





22.

Kite (Fly with faith)
2019

Gold leaf, shell gold,
natural pigments and Arabic
gum on handmade Indian
hemp paper

51.1 x 36 cm
20 1/8 x 14 1/8 in



23.

Parakeets of India
2019

Shell gold, natural pigments and Arabic gum on handmade Indian hemp paper

51.1 x 36 cm
20 1/8 x 14 1/8 in

Another recurring and more personal theme in my new body of work are parakeets. I was first inspired to paint parakeets after feeding them in London's Hyde Park. Around the same time I came across India's 'Birdman' of Chennai and Tutinama series of Persian stories from the 14th Century in which the parrot persuades his owner not to commit any adulterous act with any lover, in the absence of her husband. I then discovered a beautiful illustrated version that was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar in the later part of the 16th century, containing 250 miniature paintings. I am always reminded of this cultural heritage when I see these exotic visitors from the tropical climates of Western Africa and lowland India adding a dash of electric, acid green to the British landscape. The ring-necked, or rose-ringed, parakeet – now the UK's most abundant naturalised parrot – calls to mind the interconnectedness of life on Earth and how our human experiences and stories replay in different places in time and space.



24.

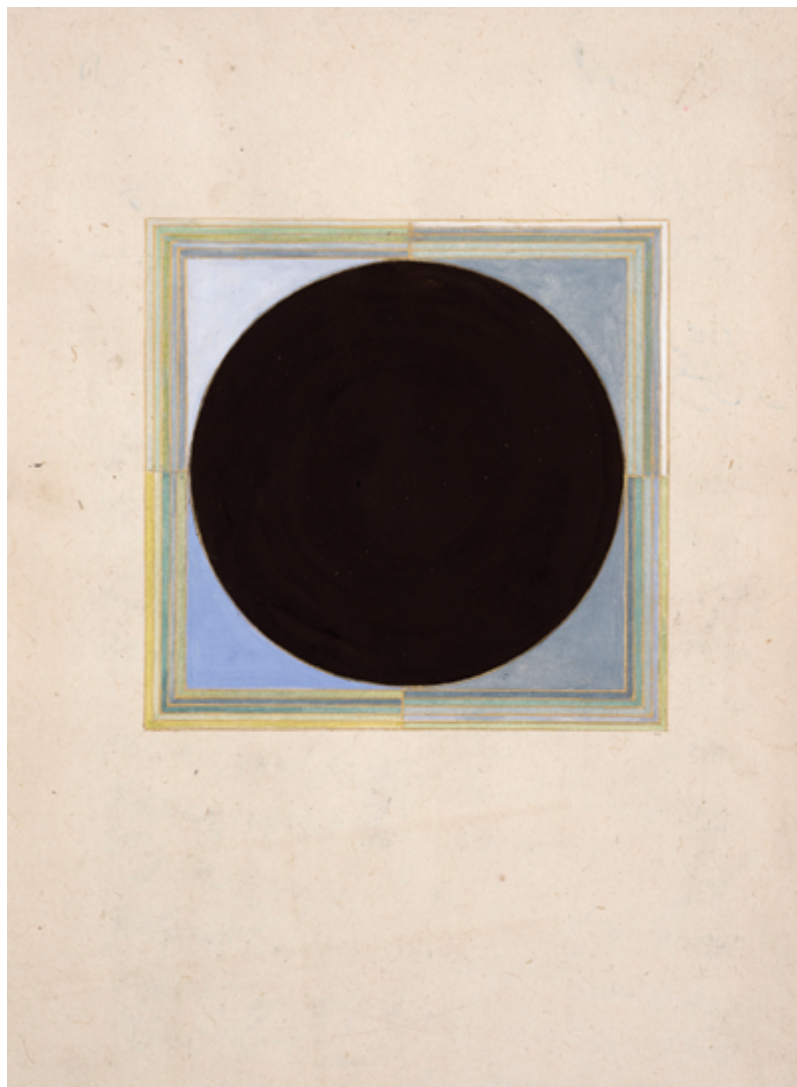
Parakeets of Pakistan

2019

Shell gold, natural pigments
and Arabic gum on handmade
Indian hemp paper

51.1 x 36 cm

20 1/8 x 14 1/8 in



25.

Homage to S.H. Raza

2019

Gold leaf and natural pigments
on antique Indian paper

31 x 21,5 cm
12 ¼ x 8 ½ in

26.

Albatross Snow Dream

2017

Natural pigment and Arabic
gum on antique Indian paper

31.5 x 21.5 cm

12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in





ELISABETH DEANE

Elisabeth Deane (b. 1985) is a painter who uses ancient traditional techniques to make work with a contemporary twist. Elisabeth's colours and detailed brushwork are inspired by Islamic geometry and the miniature painting traditions of India and Iran.

Learning from the Masters in India

While studying at the University of Cambridge in 2011, Elisabeth won the Helga Todd Foundation Award which gave her the opportunity to spend two months working in Santiniketan, West Bengal. It was this experience that led to her initial interest in the artistic traditions of India. While in Santiniketan, Elisabeth was also inspired by the works of Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore – both his writings, including the beautiful verse of Gitanjali, and his paintings. Elisabeth has since returned to India in 2013 and in 2018, studying under Master miniature painters in Rajasthan, improving her knowledge of stone and plant-based pigments while also enjoying 'chai breaks' with their aromas of cardamom and ginger.

Education

Elisabeth learnt much of her craft at The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts where she completed an MA in 2017 and also met her husband Jethro Buck – a fellow artist and miniature painter. Elisabeth has obtained degrees in History of Art (BA), and the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (MA) from the University of East Anglia and a PGCE in Art & Design from the University of Cambridge. While studying at The Prince's School, Elisabeth became an Albukhary Foundation scholar and was also awarded a bursary from The Temple Gallery, London. In 2018, she was a finalist in the Asian Art in London Emerging Artist Award. She has exhibited in a number of group exhibitions nationally and internationally. Elisabeth now lives and works in Cambridge.

Colour, Harmony and Natural Pigments

"My aim is to yield delight and joy through the geometric arrangement of colour". Many of the colours are stone based – lapis lazuli, malachite and cinnabar – and all have been sourced from the earth and then ground painstakingly by hand. "I am interested in intricate patterns and colour relationships. Natural pigments are beautiful. I'm aiming for that right combination of colours which when brought together create vibrations, ones that sing." The abstract geometric nature of much of Elisabeth's work represents both the simple and the universal, the micro and the macro and the interplay between these dichotomies.

EXHIBITIONS & AWARDS 2008–19

Born March 1985
Lives Cambridge

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Rhythmic Measures*, Grosvenor Gallery, London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Carpet Pages I*, Willesden Gallery, London

2018 *Icons for Unity*, British Association of Iconographers,
St. Saviour's Church, Pimlico, London

2018 *Icons: Writing in Gold*, Conquest House Gallery, Canterbury

2017 *Leaving a Trace*, OED Gallery, Cochin, Kerala, India

2017 The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts Degree Show

AWARDS AND PRIZES

2018 Finalist *Asian Art in London* Emerging Artist Award

2015–2017 The Albukhary Foundation Scholarship

2017 The Temple Gallery Bursary

2011 Outreach India, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India:

Helga Todd Foundation Award, University of Cambridge

2008 *British Institute in Eastern Africa* Graduate Attachment Award



His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales talking to Elisabeth Deane about her art work at The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts Degree show (2017)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first solo exhibition is dedicated, with much love, to my grandmother Mimi who has always encouraged me to believe I had this in me and, to the memory of my late aunt Sue who was an inspiration in every way and who very sadly passed away in January this year.

I would like to thank Master miniature painter Sanju Soni of Udaipur, India, who initially inspired my journey and all my fabulous teachers at The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts.

I would like to express my appreciation to Master miniature painters Ajay and Vinita Sharma and Naveed Sadiq for their knowledge, inspiration and encouragement and for their willingness to answer a thousand questions!

Thank you to my parents Merope and Melford and my brother George for your support and encouragement and also to those close friends who have been on this journey beside me, especially Rachel Wood and Matt Whitaker.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my husband Jethro Buck for consistently supporting my painting and the pursuit of my dreams in every way.

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