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Oliver-Bijan Daryoush: *The Conference of Dreams*
June 4 – August 8, 2021

Opening Reception: Friday, June 4, 6–8 pm

“Tie a timeless love letter to your feet
and don’t unfold it for eternity.
Trade in your rational mind for heart’s knowledge
And see how the beginning is the end.”

Excerpted from *The Conference of the Birds*, by Farid ud-Din Attar, translated by Sholeh Wolpé



Oliver-Bijan Daryoush © Steam, 2021

Kapp Kapp, New York is pleased to present Oliver-Bijan Daryoush: *The Conference of Dreams*. This marks Daryoush’s debut exhibition with Kapp Kapp and his first solo exhibition. Daryoush’s vibrant colored pencil drawings interlace elements of Persian mythology with contemporary queer folklore. Through his lustful and radiant palette, Daryoush celebrates both states of consciousness and dreaming; With no traces of a seam to distinguish between, Daryoush elaborately combines elements of two worlds.

The exhibition’s title is an interpolation of the twelfth century Persian poem by Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of The Birds*, itself a reference to a telling of the Qur’an. As Daryoush recalls, the poem finds all the birds of the world having come together in search of their new sovereign. Following a treacherous march through seven valleys, the birds come to realize that they themselves are the leader they have been searching for.

Daryoush himself is fascinated with the power of the human experience and finds deep kinship with Attar’s message, understanding one’s position in the “game of life” and how to “live for oneself,” as Daryoush puts it. Daryoush’s palette is intimately entwined with this understanding and appreciation of life; his use of psychedelic colors is a means of infusing his works with his exploration of and curiosity for the layers of the human soul. Take *Gush*, 2021, which sensually splays a fuchsia figure coiled with unplaceable bits of vine and trees, seemingly floating on or in water. The figure’s gaze is one both of consummate longing and understanding, acknowledging Daryoush’s sense of wonder and connection to life and the greater ecosystem of energy around him. Likewise, the figure is draped with a pink Iris to its side, a reference to a motif repeated in Persian rugs, usually to represent a freedom of religion, but to Daryoush the Iris serves as an image of liberty itself.

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Both Persian history and mythology are an abundant reference point for Daryoush, who is Iranian himself. Each figure of Daryoush's is embellished, for example, with an ornament on their chest, the Tree of Life, another aesthetic allusion to Persian rugs, symbolically denoting a direct path from Earth to Heaven, a link between these two worlds, but disguised in a language unique to the artist.

Similarly, Daryoush gestures to the 10th century epic *Shahnameh*, written by poet Ferdowsi, in his drawing *Rostam slays the white div*, 2021. This piece, which finds a horned, white creature, somewhere between man and demon, with a bleeding wound inflicted by a blade presumably held by Rostam. Engulfed by vibrant orange flames, the demon is sensuously contrasted by the rich blues and purples of the background. Offering an unplaceable landscape and a dreamlike absence of time, Daryoush looks directly to the narratives and characters from this book of myth and history of the Persian Empire to invent a new telling of the story.

Elegiac in his manipulation of color and body, Daryoush's narratives serve as much a reference as a daydream. Take *Walking through dreams, nightmares, and memories (Part 2)*, 2021, Daryoush sets a green figure in a body of water. Wearing an orange swimsuit and pink swimming goggles standing before an apricot-colored sky, the figure is covered in blood-filled leeches. With details of his story so uniquely rendered for the 21st century, Daryoush plays with his viewer's perception, leaving a liminality so detailed one cannot be sure if they are observing the plot of a centuries old history or a morning's memory from a night's dream.

The Conference of Dreams will be on view at Kapp Kapp, New York through August 8. The exhibition is accompanied by an original soundtrack composed by the artist.

Oliver-Bijan Daryoush (b. 1997, New York, NY) is a British-Iranian artist living and working between London, Paris, and Los Angeles. Daryoush received his BA in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins in London. Recent exhibitions include, Guts Gallery, London; and Going Postal Gallery, New York & London.