

An Artist's Tribute To Kashmir's Paradise In A Series Of Abstract Paintings



By [Archit Shetye](#) | Posted May 30 2019

While the digitization of art has resulted in democratization of creative expression, one can't help but think how it has synthesized these artforms and made them less human. Music which was once played solely on instruments, can now be made on laptops. Paintings that were once crafted with colours and paper, can now be photoshopped. These dire times of [climate change](#) demand we be in harmony with nature, and art is a great way doing that!

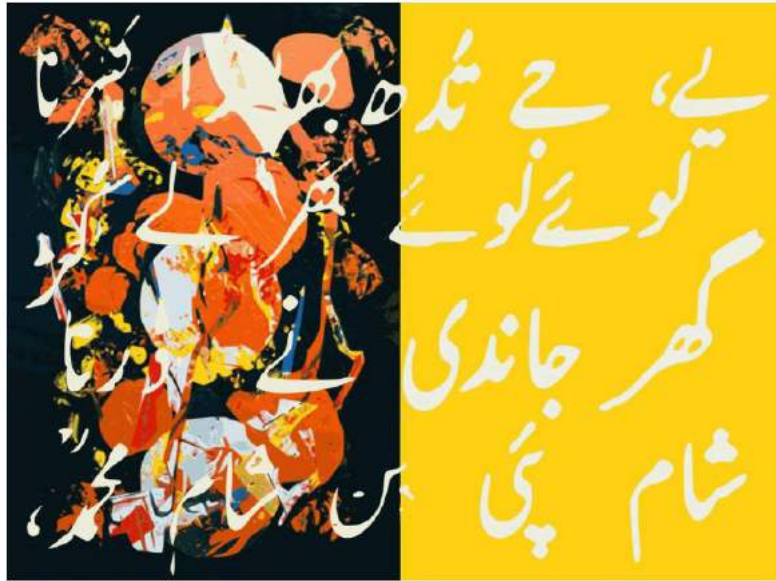
Pakistan born British contemporary artist Nasser Azam's latest series of large-scale abstract paintings are at the impeccable intersection of art, humanity and nature. *Nasser Azam: Saiful Malook*, follows the artist's pilgrimage to lake Saiful Malook, a secluded paradise near the mountains of Kashmir.



Lake Saiful Malook was made famous by the Sufi saint and poet Mian Muhammad Bakhsh (1830 - 1907) in his [poem](#) of the same name, and is located in modern-day Pakistan close to the military controlled Kashmir border. The poem was popularised in the 90s by the qwaliyan (a genre of music based on the devotional poetry of Sufism) musician Nushret Fateh Ali Khan, who translated it into song and introduced it to the West. It tells the story of a Prince of Persia who starts a restless journey to the lake in search of a fairy princess he saw in a dream.

Inspired by the poem, Azam visited Saiful Malook in August 2018, with British Indian composer Soumik Datta and British Indian photographer and filmmaker Souvid Datta. Each artist created work in situ on the banks of the lake, one of the highest in the country. Azam's paintings that form the exhibition in London follow the thematic journey of the poem, interweaving ideas of enlightenment, struggle and sacrifice with his own life and work as an artist.

Azam comments: "What first intrigued me about the poem was discovering how it was inspired by the paradise-like settings of the majestic lake, Saiful Malook. On the surface, the poem can be interpreted as a fable, but when you peel back the layers - it's a love story, and a story of humanity, passion, struggle and sacrifice. Most poignant is the poet as an artist searching for personal creative fulfilment through divine intervention, seeking ways to get his audience to appreciate his quest as a social message. This is intertwined with the charm of Sufi poetry. The poem is progressive and timeless, as relevant today as it was when first written. I hope my works, created in situ and on return from the trip - capture the spirit of the location and poem".



Before The Moon Sets II

Nasser Azam: Saiful Malook will be on display at the Saatchi Gallery, London, from 30 May to 10 June 2019. To know more about the event check out exhibition or artist studio page.