

SHOOTING STARS: BAGHDAD TO PARIS *ETOILES FILANTES: BAGHDAD À PARIS*

MAYSALOUN FARAJ . Paris 2018

The sun has set and dusk is settling over our date-palm(ed) garden, accentuating the scent of orange blossom and rose-watered melon, gently lingering in the air. *Um Kulthum's* emotive vocals beam through the 'Raadion' (radio) from my parent's bedroom window. Family, friends, neighbors and our pet dog too, gather in and around the garden swing for chit-chat, cool mint cucumber yogurt, and simply a wind-down from another hot summer day in Baghdad.

The warm night comes to a close; it is time to clear up and head to rooftops and dreams. Treading what seems like endless flights of stairs, often carrying my baby sister, breathless I reach the 'Baitouna' (a small space leading directly onto the 'Sateh' (surface/rooftop)).

Eagerly I head to my metal-framed bed and roll out the coiled-up mattress, leaving it to cool down from the scorching heat basking in the sun. At last, I lie down, face up and in awe... I gaze at the stars!

I cannot help but contemplate the vastness of the universe and how minuscule we humans are in comparison.

We are all now up on the rooftop, each on our 'cooled-up' bed, ready for the night... counting stars! My brother, sisters and I play the last game of the day: *Who Can Spot A Shooting Star!*.

In the silence of the night we search intently and sure enough 'I see one, just there!' pointing into infinity. A shimmering trail of light appears and in seconds, dis-appears into the dark velvet background. I hear my sister: 'And another just there... and there!'. As the evening simmers we are all immersed in the magic of these fleeting moments. Fleeting though they are, in our memory they are forever. This is just one of the many beautiful experiences I had growing up in 1970s Baghdad where I lived and loved.

In the heart of Paris, this beautiful *City of Lights*, I find myself at another

juncture in my life, pondering yet again on 'fleeting moments' and in my mind's eye, vividly recollect the Shooting Stars of Baghdad!

The encounters between strangers here at the *Cite Internationale Des Arts*, are potent, ever-changing and unique with sudden and immediate connections. Into this benevolent field we are drawn and welcomed from all over the world. I have exchanges with people who I will probably never see again. Though the content of our discussions remains sharp and intense, it continues to unfold with new meaning in my memory. As time passes, everyone moves away and our time comes to an end, just as everything comes to an end.

These fleeting moments are almost a test of solidarity in an immense gathering of humanity, where one learns about other people, and about oneself. I reflect on the transience of life and these 'fleeting moments', for after all, are we not all but Shooting Stars!



Achernar
'Akher al-Nahar:
River's End'
Acrylic on canvas
92x73cm
Paris 2018





Something About Stars

Of the roughly 10,000 stars visible to the naked eye, only a few hundred have been given names in the history of astronomy. The origin of many of these is Arabic. Examples include **Achernar** 'Akhir al-Nahar: River's End', **Ain** 'Ain: Eye' and **Adhil** 'Al-Thayl: The Trail/Tail', many of which I have referenced in the titles of my paintings.

In an ongoing exploration of geometric abstraction my visual vocabulary is reduced to basic shapes; an ideal realm for harmony and order. Beyond the mechanics of measured arrangement, the colour compositions invite broader discussions in conscious dialogue with Kazimir Malevich's *Suprematism*, Piet Mondrian's *De Stijl* and Sonia Delaunay's *Orphism*.

In the face of colossal destructive forces, my need to counter shadow with light is urgent. My colour choices are designed to exude nurturing light and renewed energy.

Shooting Stars: Baghdad to Paris will form part of a larger exhibition entitled *Let's Make Light* planned with Ayyam Gallery (Dubai).

Maysaloun Faraj Paris 2018

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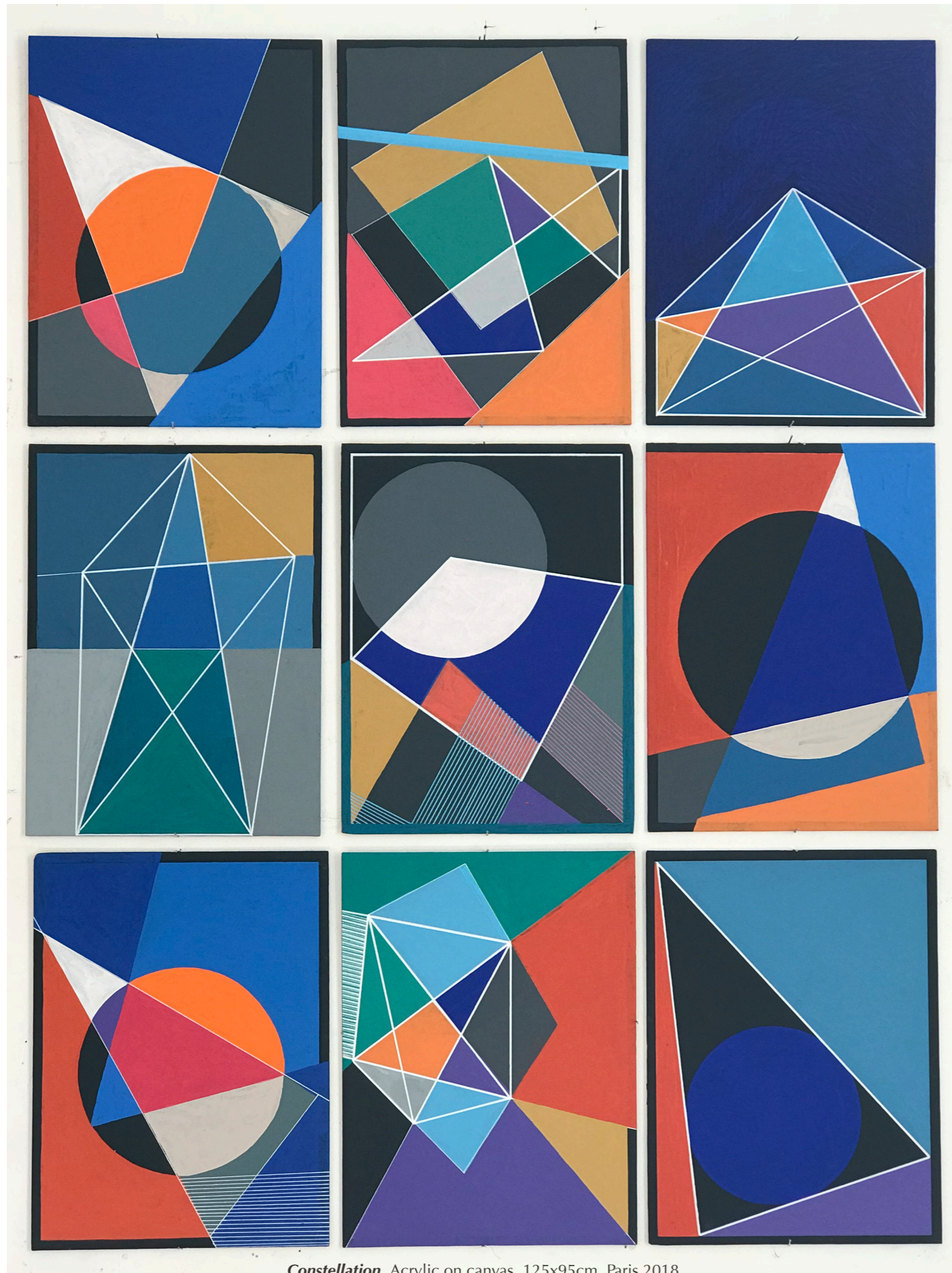
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Adhafera
'The Braid/Strand of the Lion's Mane'
Acrylic on canvas
35x25cm
Paris 2018

Alamak
'Anaq al-Ardh: Desert Lynx'
Acrylic on canvas
73x60cm
Paris 2018

Mansouria Foundation: Cité Internationale des Arts (all work in progress)
Paris 2018



Constellation Acrylic on canvas 125x95cm Paris 2018



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