

**PRESS RELEASE**

**2 May 2019**

**NASSER AZAM: SAIFUL MALOOK**  
**30 MAY - 10 JUNE 2019**



Nasser Azam: Saiful Malook © Azam Studio, photo by Souvid Datta

**PRESENTED BY AZAM STUDIOS**  
**SAATCHI GALLERY**

**Private View: 30 May 2019**

Nasser Azam will unveil a new series of abstract and large-scale paintings at the Saatchi Gallery, London from 30 May to 10 June 2019. The exhibition *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".*

*Nasser Azam: Saiful Malook* will be on display at the Saatchi Gallery from 30 May to 10 June 2019. The exhibition has been supported by Marea, New York, Altamarea Group and Brookland Partners.

To view a film of Nasser Azam at Saiful Malook click [here](#).

**ENDS**

For further information, images or interviews please contact:  
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### **About Nasser Azam**

Nasser Azam (b. 1963, Jhelum, Pakistan) is a London-based British contemporary artist. Azam's reputation was established in the 1980s, with exhibitions in Birmingham and the West Midlands including the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. In 2007 Azam became Artist-in-Residence at County Hall Gallery, London, mounting a series of exhibitions including the critically acclaimed *Anatomica*. In February 2008 Azam's monumental bronze, *The Dance*, was unveiled on London's South Bank. It was followed in 2012 by the unveiling of *Athena* in the London City Airport; at 12 metres it is the tallest bronze sculpture in the UK. Azam has developed his painting working in extreme conditions and exploring painting as a performance, from *Zero Gravity* (Star City, Moscow, 2008), to the ice deserts of Antarctica (2010). A bronze sculpture *Evolutionary Loop 517* was unveiled outside the new research centre and library at Aberdeen University in 2013, when Azam also completed a commission for Costata, part of the Altamarea Group of restaurants in SoHo, New York. In 2014, the group acquired works for display at their flagship restaurant Marea in Manhattan, New York. In 2015 Azam unveiled the official portrait commission of Malala Yousafzai at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, UK. In 2017, following the tenth anniversary of the first generation iPhone, Azam created a series of artworks titled Phone Painting. Azam's work is included in numerous private and public collections, including The Zabłudowicz Collection

and the Sovereign Arts Foundation. <https://www.azam.com/>

**About Soumik Datta**

Soumik Datta is a musician, composer, television presenter and virtuoso player of the rare stringed instrument, sarod. Born in India, raised in London, Soumik combines his roots in Indian classical music with progressive and innovative sounds. He has collaborated with Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Bill Bailey, Nitin Sawhney, Anoushka Shankar, Talvin Singh, Joss Stone, Akram Khan, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Shankar Ehsaan Loy, Javed Akhtar, London Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia. Soumik debuted as a television presenter on Channel 4's 'Tuning 2 You: Lost Musicians of India', which he directed along with his brother, Souvid Datta. In 2019, Soumik presents a prestigious three-part series on BBC4 exploring the ancient and modern music of India.

**About Souvid Datta**

Souvid Datta is a London-based creative director, visuals producer and filmmaker with six years' experience developing stories and multimedia content for the editorial, news, advertising and commercial sectors. After completing a degree in International Relations, Law and Conflict Studies at UCL, he has gone on to produce commissioned and personal projects in over 50 countries with clients including Google, National Geographic Magazine, The New York Times, Channel 4, BBC Studios, TIME and The Guardian. Through narrative storytelling and visual-led investigations, Souvid's work tackles under-reported contemporary issues through the lens of empowering, human-led stories.

