



# TOWNLEY GALLERY

7 FRANKLIN PLACE  
NEW YORK, NY 10013

EXHIBITION DATES: SEPTEMBER 1 - SEPTEMBER 30,  
2019





## ABOUT THE ARTIST

# LEVENT TUNCER

Tuncer's paintings often draw heavily from and reinterpret stylizations within the history of art. However, he looks beyond the formal rules of drawing and design to his inner psyche, often conjuring his painting out of what he calls a "Proustian space" — that state between sleep and wakefulness where memories fluoresce and shift. The parameters of this state of consciousness are malleable and porous, like memory itself. Taken as whole, Tuncer's body of work establishes a dialogue about cultural dualities using imagery derived from art, architecture, tiling, and textile designs. These elements become emblematic of his cross-cultural themes.

For example, in his extensive "History/Fiction" series, Tuncer works with a single sixteenth-century Iznik tile design, repeating and altering it, superimposing various geometric systems on it, thus creating a complex visual equivalent of cultural disjuncture. In painterly language, he subverts the pattern's repetitive rigidity and forces it to evolve from its original historical context. Using similar techniques, he also explores dualities inherent in all cultures: order and disorder, past and present, repetition and change. His paintings are intuitive and psychological, the figurations accomplished and compelling.

Levent Tuncer lives and works in New York and Tampa, Florida, holding studio spaces in both locations. He was born in Edirne, Turkey and at the age of eighteen he moved to London to earn an arts education at St. Martins School of Art. Graduating from the Hornsey School of Art, Tuncer subsequently received a full scholarship to the University of Hartford, Connecticut to pursue his MFA in painting. Over four decades of artistic production, his work has been recognized by way of receiving several grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and Artists' Space (NYC). What's more, he has twice been named a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. The artist has exhibited nationally and internationally, including venues in the Netherlands, Ireland, Kuwait, Dubai, Colombia, and the United States. In 2007, he created twenty-two paintings measuring 142 linear feet for the University Church in Dublin, Ireland—a joint commission from the church and the Irish government. Some of his recent exhibitions include: *Come Together: Surviving Sandy* (2013); *Talisman* (Painting Center, 2015); and *In the Shadows: Contemporary Artists and Obsessive Memory* (2015, Western Michigan University).





Levent Tuncer pictured with works from his “Jinndom” series in his studio in Brooklyn.



# JINNS AMONG US

Levent Tuncer is a Turkish-American artist. The paintings on display here are from his “Jinndom” series. Initially inspired by an anonymous fifteenth-century Iranian drawing, the series explores the mythical jinns featured in eastern lore from China and Japan to India, the Middle East, and Turkey. Trickster spirits capable of appearing in human and animal form and of influencing society for good or ill, the jinns of eastern art are typically found in miniatures and manuscript illuminations. Here, however, they are painted in a contemporary way, with scale, depth, and perspective radically and playfully altered from their original renderings.

Cross-cultural alignment/misalignment also plays a major role in Tuncer’s work, for these are essentially hybrid paintings that mine the fertile intersection of eastern and western art historical traditions to yield a rich perspective. Often the imagery itself signifies different things for different peoples. For example, the owl is a symbol of wisdom in some societies and a harbinger of death in others. Tuncer fruitfully probes the ambiguities and contradictions of such disjunctures. And like the artists before him, East and West, who worked within highly stylized genres, he embeds hidden images and visual puns in his work that serve as memory triggers and guideposts—people, plants, animals, and other talismans. Sometimes delicate and ethereal, other times bold and ominous, Tuncer’s figurations invite his viewers to discover their own creaturely presences within the animated reality of the canvas. This interaction between painting and viewer makes for an unusually exciting and dynamic visual experience.

Several years into his Jinndom series Tuncer learned that this phenomenon— the perception of familiar shapes and objects in random or abstract patterns—has a name. It is called pareidolia. Seeing faces in clouds is a commonplace occurrence of it. Many classical artists—Leonardo, Giotto, Holbein and Arcimboldo among them—noted and took advantage of this phenomenon, often planting malleable images in their work to the delight and fascination of their viewers.

Instances of pareidolia abound in Tuncer’s work. In the center of number 53, for example, the loose brushwork that resembles doodling resolves for some viewers into the profile of a reclining head. Behind the nearby tree, a frog peeks out for other viewers. Thus the paintings create a flexible narrative that is individuated for each spectator depending upon the imagery he or she identifies. Naturally, memory plays a vital part in this process, since it supplies the transformative mindset with which one recaptures the past and colors the future. Hence, a shape resembling a toy from one viewer’s childhood may not appear at all for another viewer. This Rorschach-like mutability ensures that Tuncer’s paintings provide a unique aesthetic and emotional encounter for every person. Each of us will experience our own version of this ineffable world in which the jinns of myth and of memory are everywhere among us if we seek them out.



TOWNLEY GALLERY PRESENTS

# *LEVENT TUNCER*

PAINTINGS



## **TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

## **#53**

Oil on canvas  
77 x 84 1/2 in  
50.000 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#26**

Oil on canvas  
106 x 96 in  
75.000 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#25**

Oil on canvas  
106 x 96 in  
75.000 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#9**

Oil on canvas  
120 x 89 in  
75.000 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#46**

Oil on canvas  
24 x 20in  
2900 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#51**

Oil on canvas  
24 x 20in  
2900 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#50**

Oil on canvas  
24 x 20in  
2900 USD





**TITLE**

Medium  
Size  
Price

**#49**

Oil on canvas  
24 x 20in  
2900 USD



# CURRICULUM VITÆ

## EDUCATION

M.F.A. in painting, University of Hartford, CT, U.S.A.

B. A., Honors, Hornsey School of Arts (Middlesex University), London, U.K.

Foundation Course, St. Martins School of Arts, London, U.K.

Sir John Cass School of Art, London, U.K.

Ankara National Conservatory, Theater Section, Ankara, Turkey.

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

Full Scholarship, University of Hartford, CT (MFA)

Pollock/Krasner Foundation, Painting Grant

Artist's Assistance Grant, Artists Space, NYC.

Two Fellowships, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Lynchburg, VA.

## MAJOR COMMISSION (2006/7)

The University Church, Dublin, Ireland.

22 paintings totaling 150 linear feet by ten feet depicting events in the lives of Peter and Paul and twelve individual apostles. After Raphael. Joint commission from the church and the Irish government.

## PREVIOUS GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1999: Two-person Show, Kingdom Fine Arts Gallery, Boston, MA.

1998: Three-person Show, Gallery A'pert, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

1995: "Chaos/Order," Linhartova Nadace, "Roxy," Prague, Czech Republic.

1994: "Spatial Ambiguities," Marymount Manhattan College Gallery, NYC.

1993: Two Person Show, M-13 Gallery, NYC.

1990: The Bronx Museum of Art, NYC.

1990: Jan Weiss Gallery, NYC.

1988: BACA Downtown, Brooklyn, NY.



1987: BACA Downtown, Brooklyn, NY.

1986: BACA Downtown, Brooklyn, NY.

1985: "Relative Meaning: Figure in Context," Hallwals, Buffalo, New York.

1984: Minor Injury Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.

1984: "Selections 25," The Drawing Center, NYC.

1981: University of Hartford

1979: "Hornsey Paper Works," Traveling Show, France.

1979: "Summer Show," Royal Academy of Arts, London, U.K.

1979: "The Hornsey Show," Alexandra Palace, London, U.K.

1979: "Stowells Trophy," Royal Academy of Arts, London, U.K.

1978: "Whitechapel Open," Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, U.K.

1978: "Six Young Artists," Gillys Gallery, London, U.K.

1977: "Young Contemporaries," Royal Academy of Arts, London, U.K.

1973: "The American Way of Death, Performance, Camden Institute, London, U.K.

## RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2015: "Talisman," The Painting Center, NYC.

2014: "In the Shadows: Contemporary Artists and Obsessive Memory," Richmond Center for the Visual Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan (Western Michigan University).

2013: "Come Together: Surviving Sandy," Brooklyn, NY.

2012: Group Show, DM Contemporary, NYC.

2012: Group Show, Parkers Box Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.

2011: Summer Show, Blank Space Gallery, NYC.

2011: DM Contemporary, NYC.

2010: Two-person Show, Blank Space Gallery, NYC.

2010: La Mama Galleria, NYC.

2010: "Seeing Red," Crossing Art Gallery, NYC.

2010: DM Contemporary, NYC.



2009: DM Contemporary, NYC.

2008: DM Contemporary, NYC.

2008: Sundaram Tagore Gallery, NYC.

2007: "Neo-Abstraction," AG Gallery, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY.

2006: "New York Painters," Museo Arte Moderno de Bogota, Colombia.

2004: "The Essence of Line," Concordia College Gallery, New York.

2002: 21 Group Show, Eicholt Gallery, Manhattan, NY.

2001: Three-person Show, Gallery at Asia Minor, Manhattan, NY.

2000: Gallery at Asia Minor, Manhattan, NY.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2006: "Change and Consequence in Baghdad," Painting Center (Project Space), NYC.

1999: Gallery X, New York City.

1995: "Lush Tolerances," Project Art Center, Dublin, Ireland

1981: Joseloff Gallery, University of Hartford, Hartford, CT.

1980: Performance and Installation, University of Hartford, CT.

1979: Sultan Gallery, Kuwait.



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