

# CONVERSATION WITH UNZA SALEEM



Unza Saleem is a South Asian painter born and based in London, UK. Her work depicts memories, experiences and emotions that have influenced her life and perspective. She derives her inspiration from her heritage and culture whilst using traditional elements and symbols to create stories that her audience can relate to. Being Indian and Pakistani, she has access to a vast understanding of Punjabi and Gujrati values, which she uses to create her unique pieces. She paints for women who have been wounded for their opinions, for their dreams. She sees South Asian women as powerful entities which she paints in an alluring light to showcase their presence in an overwhelming society. Her goal is to create a space for South Asian women who have been silenced with these expectations.

*I am a South Asian artist, and my journey to becoming an artist started when I found I wasn't able to fit in anywhere, there was always a communication barrier and the only subject that did not require a language was arts. Arts allowed me to express how I felt and communicate my emotions better. That's when I decided I wanted to pursue this full-time.*

## On their journey to arts

## On personal creative education

*I graduated from UAL with my BA in Fine Art: Painting in 2023. The university is ranked second in the QS World University Rankings for Art, and though it did not necessarily teach me the skills I needed to progress with my craft but it gave me knowledge on other artists and how they find inspiration. The one thing I could stress is their ability to provide a space for experimenting and networking, and to help us find inspiration. Our University helps us gain recognition and provides exhibiting and promoting opportunities.*

*I mostly paint about memories and experiences. Traumatic times as well as romanticised ones, I like to explore life one frame at a time from an outsider's perspective. I want to recreate a feeling or emotion I felt within a picture. I paint about women and their points of view - as South Asian women we endure different kinds of traumas which are suppressed and hidden but I like to highlight and talk about them to raise awareness.*

## Messaging with art



## On Art as a representation of reality or escape from it

*I believe that my art is reflective of contemporary reality as I like to present the current state of my issues so that I may achieve a sense of unity with the community of people who also go through the same things. I believe that the South Asian region still faces issues that people don't talk about, such as arranged marriages and gender-conditioned expectations. My work is there to highlight these flaws of reality as well as dive into the past! I like to explore the stories of my grandmother and her memories, I paint about perspectives and expression. This kind of art knows no boundaries, and if it did this would not be art.*

*I have had good experience with online galleries, they take a respective commission and are organised. I do sell my art online, through a gallery and my own website. Selling out art is about finding your market, exhibiting a lot, and taking any chance to promote yourself. It has a lot to do with what you have to say. Do people want/ need to hear it? Selling work also happens a lot through networking, I would say, people buy your art as well as your story, the question is whether you have a story worth listening to.*

## **Online galleries and marketing artwork online**

