A Conversation with Khalid Shatta

Anna Lucille Boozer

BOOZER: Can you tell us about your background and how it inspires you?

SHATTA: My name is Khalid Mohamed Hammad Elkhatteem. My nickname is Khalid Shatta. Two years ago, my older brother told me that our great grandfather was named Shatta also.

I am Sudanese. I come from the Nuba Mountains in Kordofan, which is in the southern part of Sudan now. I was born in the Nuba Mountains but my family moved to Khartoum because of the war during that time and I grew up in Khartoum.

I think my family can say also that they are a collapse of the history of the war in Sudan. I grew up in Sudan. I can feel the way I grew up in Khartoum. I now try to understand how my family, they were trying to settle down to the new place in their home. We weren't used to it. Sudan is a very diverse country — its languages, its culture.

I grew up in Shag-al-Nil in Khartoum. In my area most of the people migrated from South Sudan, Nuba Mountains, or Darfur and most of those people are the people who moved because of the war or the dictator regime or the basic needs. So, I grew up with a lot of challenges of the basic needs of the family and also the basic needs of me to continue my school journey. It was always ups and downs.

I started art — I don't really know when did I start. Ever since I knew myself, I was drawing or painting. Art for me is not only a talent or hobby but also art is a kind of sacred space for me to escape and express myself. It's a silent language that I do understand myself.

I really like to travel and because of the situation of my family and of Sudan. My father, he passed away a long time

ago and it was very hard during that time. We suffered a lot and I turned out to live in the streets for many years. What inspires me is people and places and migration itself is an inspiration. Because now in a way I feel at home wherever I go. I start having that concept of "I'm from here. I'm a human being. I'm a special creature in this universe. Why I should locate myself and say 'I belong to this place?'"

I've been in Norway now for thirteen years in two places. And even in my country, I never stayed with my family for five years. So, the concept of family brings many questions for me. Once you have the right to stay in one place and the freedom to move that is home. Where you stay, find solace here, and how you can struggle to find a place to stay. But my soul is here in Norway now. But I am also very happy to have that concept that I also belong to another people, another country.

BOOZER: Multiple belongings.

SHATTA: Yes. And that shows also how it's a human journey. Some people are arriving and some people are falling so it leaves me to understand that all we have is civilization and history because we're all connected. And in a way to also be indigenous and native — everyone is native if you believe we came from one human family. We are the result of all this evolution. It doesn't matter where we are located. But also, I think I like history and culture, art, everything. But in a way I'm also observing.

BOOZER: It sounds like you carefully observe all of the people and places around you for inspiration. Is that right?

SHATTA: Yes. Also, yes sometimes is sad because the human history is built with blood and it is a very painful journey to reach wherever we are. But, also its full of change and challenge because sometimes you have a question, such as "what is an American"?

BOOZER: There's no simple answer to that.

SHATTA: Yeah! And also, in Sudan even in our ancient history there is a lot of sacrifice for the gods, there is also violence. It's painful but in a way, it is also interesting how we change and accept.

BOOZER: All of the growing pains that we go through.

SHATTA: Yeah. And the beauty too. In Sudan I went to the Nuba Mountains, I was very scared when I was there because there was war. I was scared to just walk into the forest. It's just war. But when I came to Norway, I became more

connected to the nature. Because when you are scared you can't enjoy the beauty around you.

BOOZER: You can't relax and observe.

SHATTA: I think places play a huge role in my artistic inspiration, so I like to travel.

BOOZER: It sounds like places, people, and deep histories inspire much of your work.

SHATTA: Yes, and also me and my journey of life.

BOOZER: Do you have any rituals or routines that help you with your creative process?

SHATTA: Actually, no, I have no routine. I just love to paint. I don't know how to express that. I don't have rituals. Sometimes my paintings inspire me. Sometimes just lying on my bed and looking at this painting seeing the canvas, the color, knowing I painted it, thinking "wow, this is nice!" And I feel good about that. Just to put my thoughts on canvas and create those kinds of shadows. Sometimes I don't understand it, but I like to not understand it. I like it that it creates a curiosity. Sometimes I can't explain my art, but, also, I feel it in my bones, I feel it in my soul. I can feel the power in it. I left my country because of my art. The government forced me to leave. I came to Europe because of my art. I won an international competition. I am here because of my art. I believe in that. Art can bring me to travel and also it can save me. I do believe in this power of art. I can see that power. Sometimes it is spiritual. It's something I don't understand also. But it is something that is very powerful. It is the essence of many things.

BOOZER: You spoke earlier about how art was your silent language and that it is a necessary form of communication for you. Although I am not an artist, it made sense to me how important it is to get something out of yourself. That art can feel true even if you don't understand it.

SHATTA: Yeah. It is beautiful.

BOOZER: How do you stay motivated to create?

SHATTA: You know, understanding also motivates me. Just to try to understand is motivating. Because understanding goes both ways. At the end of the day, it is understanding. If it is pain, you understand why it is pain. If it is happiness, you understand why it is happiness. So, for me, understanding itself motivates me.

BOOZER: So, understanding your feelings motivates you.

SHATTA: Yes, understanding what I'm passing through. For example, we're passing through hard times. For me as a Sudanese

even though I live in Norway I can see my people are just dying. There are so many people dying. But I need to understand the process of why we're having war. Also, it makes me more calm to accept the understanding rather than supporting the war. It's a really nice way of motivation.

BOOZER: You're accomplished at painting, drawing, and photography. What draws you to one medium over another? What differences do you find in your art when you change medium?

SHATTA: In my family I don't have a picture of me as a child. I had one picture when I think I was about five years or something, but I lost it.

BOOZER: Oh no!

SHATTA: Yeah! I didn't find it and my family didn't find it, the picture. But after that also I travelled a lot in Sudan. I moved to stay in different places. The first time I held a camera was with an organization for displaced children. They gave us a camera just to take a picture. I was happy! I felt I had a new eye to see things. And after that I just kept going, taking pictures. I even took photographic design at art school in Sudan. I like to take pictures but I find a different enjoyment in painting and drawing because I feel like it's all me. It's connected with my soul and my thoughts. And I feel like this is the knowledge I want to dive into more than taking pictures. But I can take pictures too. And from that time until now, I'm just painting, and I can see which level I am now. So now I'm thinking to take pictures because I feel like, wow. Because starting in 2009 I was a good photographer in Sudan and I made a lot of money from that, but it makes me very busy digitally. Now I'm more connected with my soul and my heart and my hands. I love that. And also, it gives me more perspective to create to make photographs. But also, because there are a billion great photographs. Photographs are very important, especially in the twentieth century, all of the history that changed the world through the photographs. Even the archive I'm working with in Berlin, because this is the one who did propaganda for Hitler, we see it's all about photographs. And even Mussolini it's about photographs. The assassination of Kennedy, it's about photographs.

BOOZER: The photographs are moving in a very specific way.

SHATTA: Yes. You know Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, it's the pictures. And it's important in that sense. But to paint or to draw is more meaningful. It connects me more. I feel it's

Figure 1. "The Unknown Hope (1)": Shatta's hometown in El-Korgal, Nuba Mountains, Sudan. (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

me, me. Because we are humans, we want that. We like to take the credit. Because this photograph is the work of the camera. This painting is me.

BOOZER: You feel more connected to the paintings.

SHATTA: Yes. Maybe I don't understand why. Maybe I don't have the right approach. I think this picture is the work of the camera. This painting is the work of me. But maybe I don't understand. Maybe don't have the right answer for now.

BOOZER: Or your feelings may change over time.

SHATTA: Yes.

BOOZER: We talked before this interview about a photograph that you took and I'd like to talk about it more now. Or we could talk about another piece that reminds you of homelife or disconnection that has a story behind it.

SHATTA: This one in the Nuba mountains with the white jalabiya (figure 1). This is where my mom and dad were born. And I don't know how to put it in English. You can feel the connection of home. The meaning is always very deep. The forest is home. The trees are a soul. And they are building what we call *rākūba* in Arabic.

BOOZER: A thatch hut?

SHATTA: Yes. And I really love it. The way of the motion and the connection. And even in my painting series, *The Migration of the Soul,* humans migrate from nature. When we migrated from nature, we became very harsh with each other. Because we don't have the language of the surroundings. We don't have the understanding. And I think that many

Figure 2. "The Unknown Hope (2)": Damazin Market, Blue Nile, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

village people are more connected with nature and they know how to define themselves with basic things. But in a way, they have a real connection with their land with nature. And I felt that in this picture.

BOOZER: Yes, you can see it in the way his arms cross.

SHATTA: Yes.

BOOZER: The connection is happening between him and the land.

SHATTA: Yes, the connection. You feel like you really belong to this earth.

BOOZER: Yes, it's beautiful. I see that connection. This one (figure 2). This is the one we were talking about before our interview began, right?

SHATTA: Yes, this is the one. And on the boy's t-shirt it says "the eagle human eye". You see it?

Boozer: Yes.

SHATTA: And if you think about it, I took this photograph in 2011. Now some of them may have three or five kids. You know how it is in my culture. And think about how in this kind of situation they are the ones who are killing. They are the ones who are stealing. They are the ones who are in the war. They are everything. And even me. If I am there, I am going to do the same thing. Because this is where I was born, this is how I was raised. This is what is normal. Because in Norway the police have no guns when patrolling. Just imagine if you grow up in a place where you have gangs everywhere.

Figure 3. "The Unknown Hope (3)": Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Khartoum (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

And also, it explains the trap of the history of Sudan. You know, because we are in war for more than sixty or seventy years, and even before that we have the British and the Egyptians, and the Turkish. In Sudan we never had a rest just to settle. The culture of war is very deep. The culture of war is also mixed with slavery and I think this is still what is ruling Sudan. It doesn't matter what place in Sudan you are located. Because especially this war reflects what Sudan is. It is very fragile. There is no basis of identity. It is a mix of races. It is a mix of people struggling. It is a mix of many things. But all these things are missing one thing. We don't have institutions to hold what we need, what we want to be as Sudanese. And I think this is one of the things. And even the system of the army that we have is a system from when the British colonized. And even the problem of South Sudan. They divided it because of the lack of opportunity for education because of the many lacks. And now South Sudan is divided too. And at that time, they said it was Christianity that was the issue, but now what about Khartoum?

In a way you feel there is a country, there is a land full of minerals, full of resources, but there is no-one who belongs to it really. You can question yourself why are we like that. Even in Europe you can find a church that is four hundred years old or six hundred or more than that. They have this knowledge, these buildings. You don't feel that different from six hundred years ago. And some of those

Figure 4. "The Unknown Hope (4)": El-Haj Yousif Neighborhood, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011)

buildings are better than now. And that shows how we are very far even in the history because Meroitic, Kemetic, or Kushitic civilization you can be proud of that. But maybe we don't even belong to those people. It shows the dilemma of education, academic, of things. Because we need to accept that first. We need to see where history leaves us. We need to see that more. Maybe this picture for me holds

Figure 5. "The Unknown Hope (5)": Blue Nile, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

those ideas. Because people think the problem is just from the former regime. No. It is deeper. It is more than that.

BOOZER: There are deep roots to it and the tree keeps growing, supported by those roots.

SHATTA: Yes. Because even the people who are in charge now in Sudan. They are Sudanese from our families. They came from the same communities. So, why do we ignore that? Ah, so this picture (figure 3), I took it in Omdurman. At that time, we were moving the South Sudanese and people from the Nuba Mountains. This is before the dividing of South Sudan. So, just imagine now what is happening in Sudan. People migrate. So, this is my city.

BOOZER: I love this one (figure 4).

SHATTA: Yeah, this is really nice, you know? This guy, he's adopted. Maybe he's a soldier now. Our neighbor was the first woman where I lived to adopt. It was for me — wow — you know? Because we were living in a poor city, in a ghetto, so for me — wow — that was really nice. It was inspiring to me. And now maybe he's in high school or something.

BOOZER: It's been thirteen years now. That's a long time in a child's life.

SHATTA: Yeah. I just loved his expression.

BOOZER: Yes, his face is so sweet.

SHATTA: Yes. This is the Fulani, the Fulani people (figure 5).

BOOZER: Tell us about the Fulani.

SHATTA: The Fulani, or Housa, are people who are located in many countries in Africa. The huge Fulani community is in

Figure 6. "The Unknown Hope (6)": Shatta's hometown, El-Korgal, Nuba Mountains, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

Nigeria. But you find them in Sudan, in Senegal, in Chad, in Mali. Not like the Dogons. But the Fulani are linked even with the Tuwari, Tugu, and have other kinds of links. They really love cows like the Nuer in South Sudan. In Sudan we know them as *Omboro*. They are very spiritual. They are Muslim but also other things. In the Nuba Mountains we

Figure 7. "The Unknown Hope (7)": El-Haj Yousif Neighborhood, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

call in *kujur,* like voodoo, but those people also have these kinds of rituals with their cows.

BOOZER: So, they have other traditions and spiritualism entangled with Islam.

SHATTA: Yes, it is mixed because they are Muslim. Yes, all over Africa and even in Sudan where most of us are Muslim we

Figure 8. "The Unknown Hope (8)": Roseires Dam, Blue Nile at Ad Damazin, Sudan (Khalid Shatta, 2011).

have our roots in other traditions. This one is in el Kargal my hometown (figure 6). This is also Fulani.

BOOZER: Awe, so cute!

SHATTA: Yes.

BOOZER: This is a beautiful one (figure 7).

SHATTA: This is my niece.

BOOZER: She's so beautiful. Her face and the light you capture on it is just amazing.

SHATTA: It's really beautiful. This picture, I took it in a kitchen, but I took it I think with candles for light and a red lamp.

BOOZER: The lighting on it is so beautiful. Her face is so striking.

SHATTA: Now they are in a safer place. Kassala. They got out of Khartoum two months ago.

BOOZER: I'm glad to hear that…but…everyone is moving. It's so hard.

SHATTA: Yes, just imagine how tough it was for them.

BOOZER: Just to get out of the heart of the war.

SHATTA: Yes. There's one picture, I need to discuss with you, this one (figure 8). Imagine these people. They live beside the dam on the Blue Nile. Those people live just three meters from the dam and they don't have access.

BOOZER: They don't have access to the water?

SHATTA: Yes, they don't have access to the water.

BOOZER: That's incredible. They're so close.

SHATTA: Yes, I love this picture. This one is part of a series. When did I take this one? This was part of *Migration of the Soul* or *Gods in Action.* The red drawings. Should we also look at them?

Figure 9. "Migration of the Soul" (Khalid Shatta, 2019).

BOOZER: Yes, let's do that! I have them here. I really like this one (figure 9).

SHATTA: Yes, this one is nice.

BOOZER: Would you like to tell us a bit about it?

SHATTA: This one is part of *Migration of the Soul.*[1] The point is not the physical migration but the mental migration. And also, the

1 SHATTA: in "The Migration of the Soul" series I have been dealing with the way we may feel out of place. When we have to flee, from one country to another, from your home to a camp, from your worn torn village to the capital city, that is not simply physical migration but manifests in our feeling a sensation of being disconnected. Fleeing your home and having to settle in another country or a capital, where you have little resources, no connections, arriving with trauma and emotional baggage for which there might be no help available, having to carve out a place for yourself in an unfamiliar society, is an alienating experience. I make frequent use of ancient Kemetic and Cushitic symbols from the historical kingdoms of the Nile valley civilisations, the ancestors of the community in which I was born in Sudan's Nuba mountains. I want to show how our past is connected to our present selves, and that when we lose the connection to the past, we may feel displaced. When we don't

way how we feel disconnected from our own existence. For me it is also more like how we are engaging in time together. But also, time changes and many things can disappear with time, through time. For example, for us as humans — I'm just thinking, I don't know if I'm right or not — but we are the last creatures who live on this earth. When we arrived here, we found everything for us, whether through evolution or whatever. We find the trees, we find the world, we find everything. And from there we build the human civilization. And we had the first migration and it's a lot of knowledge that came from this small family of human beings. And then came the first ancient peoples the first ancient civilizations. And now we are here in, say 2000. For me, to be in 2000 — wow — just imagine that we are the product of many little, little things.

BOOZER: Many small past actions and events?

SHATTA: Yes. And when we look at this perspective, just wow. It's not about how long am I going to live, but how did I become a product of all of human evolution.

BOOZER: Coming to this body, to this place, during this period.

SHATTA: Yes, with these clothes, with this knowledge. You know? So, if you can see, there are Wifi signs. So, for us, as modern peoples, sometimes when we go to temples, or to mosques, or to church, we get shocked by what those people in ancient times created. The beauty. But for us even we have our own civilization. You are in New York City; I am in Oslo. We speak through our laptops.

BOOZER: That is its own wonder.

SHATTA: Yes. You see it is also evolution and our time. And if we brought someone from ancient times here, he would be — wow — he's going to worship us!

BOOZER: Yes, the technology we command is incredible.

SHATTA: Yes. You see, he's going to worship us. It's normal! And that's why I feel sometimes, it's like humans we have really smart and beautiful minds to create things. But when we link our soul with belief, we loose our power somehow. Also, there are the trees in the picture, human trees. It's like a forest.

know who we are, we feel lost. I also seek to explore how the alienating and seemingly chaotic state of migration connects us. Whether we have fled war and trauma or not, we face suffering and hurt, we feel disconnected and lost. Our souls may transfer - migrate, if you will - to a different place and, paradoxically, that alienating experience brings us all closer. Through exploring what I refer to as the migration of the soul, I believe that we may understand each other better. In the "Migration of the Soul" series, the sensation is of being out of place. We live in a time where many people feel a disconnection from their own bodies and existence.

Figure 10.
"Gods in Action (1)" (Khalid Shatta, 2021).

So, for me, it's about we and them. It's about our history and about our present.

BOOZER: The deep history running into the present.

SHATTA: Yes, and sometimes we forget that. That's what inspires me too. The forgetting.

BOOZER: I love this one (figure 10).

Figure 11. "Gods in Action (2)" (Khalid Shatta, 2021).

SHATTA: It is from a series called *Gods in Action.*[2] So, *Gods in Action*

2 SHATTA: The "Gods in Action" series offers a perspective on how we represent the divine through art, craft, music, and dance. As a point of departure, I want to focus on indigenous communities in multiple parts of the world, one of which includes myself as a member, as a member of an indigenous community in the Nuba mountains of Sudan. I explore how these expressions are shaped by the environment we live in, how they differ and what connects them. I want to invite you to a journey from the Nile to the Oceanic communities of the Pacific Ocean, and beyond. I explore how the divine is expressed and experienced in the

was inspired by a specific ocean. Solomon Islands and those people. The way they portray their gods is a very scary way. And even when they welcome someone, it is scary. For me, I find it very interesting how people live by the ocean. The way they are creating their gods. For me, if you live near the ocean you need to have a god that can scare the huge waves of the water. I don't know. I'm just trying to think through it. So, I call it *God's in Action* because let's imagine how God moves things. Many of us have the image of God, but where is the action?

BOOZER: He looks like a very active God here.

SHATTA: Yes, he's moving! This one is the Nile (figure 11). In Africa in general we like to organize by family and by sticking together. Sometimes I feel, in Sudan in general, we have connections with nature in a spiritual way. Because we are always symbolizing things. People portray themselves like the snake, the lion, whatever. Maybe the point is to study the movement of these animals and to portray themselves as these creatures. And also, the fish. The fish is my favorite sign. I enjoy using it in my art. And in Sudan, in the Nuba Mountains, they draw alligators, elephants, and fish in the caves. Because, as we said before, there is a lot of knowledge that we inherited through our ancestors. It came through the blood. It needs our body to relax to receive that knowledge again.

So, I feel like maybe if the wars end in Sudan it's possible to bring back again a lot of things, a lot of knowledge that we didn't understand as of now. This knowledge needs caring from the government to move forward. But, for me, I'm just saving my questions so sometimes my art is just a question for the future of how to use it in Sudan. Because sometimes I feel Sudan is just an empty place. We have to build it from scratch. And I use art sometimes as the missing home. Because here I live really good. I enjoy life. But sometimes I get this feeling of "ahhh, I came from Sudan." I remember. And I feel sad and I feel like — wow — I have to do that in Sudan. Because I feel what we are missing. What we are missing in Sudan, we are missing the foundation. This is an illustration showing question (figure 12). I love the human expression. The eyes. I paint a lot of eyes.

BOOZER: This one has so many eyes and faces. It looks like there are many perspectives on the question.

environment we live in, and in our art and rituals, as well as to explore the belief systems we use to enable ourselves to conceptualize it. And I explore how these expressions connect to a wider context, beyond the communities.

Figure 12. "Gods in Action (3)" (Khalid Shatta, 2023).

SHATTA: Yeah.

BOOZER: Thank you so much for going through these with me.

SHATTA: You're welcome. There are also many new ones.

BOOZER: How has living abroad shaped your perspective of homelife in Sudan?

SHATTA: I think living in Norway, it's a balance of understanding myself, understanding my country, understanding Norway.

Because, in a way, sometimes I feel I am missing something in Sudan. But me being here it makes it easier to observe. I become more like a watcher. I can see my tree, my journey in Sudan. I can see how I landed here. And there are many things in Sudan that I couldn't understand because of many things. Because of the basic needs, because of the war, because of the family. Every time I understand something that I used to struggle to understand. But also understanding that side of trauma and the struggle with the new world to settle in a new place. In a way it gives me rest to understand Sudan. But also, some years ago it all clashed together and I lost myself. You understand?

BOOZER: Yes.

SHATTA: Deep trauma, depression, stress, and anxiety and on top of that what's going on. Boom. It was really — wow. And now I'm just saying it's a good experience. *Yanni,*[3] I love the journey! Because also Norway, it's a place that makes me able to understand myself right now. And also, in my art journey because I made all those arts here. To make art is not an easy thing if you live in fear.

BOOZER: You need mental space in order to create.

SHATTA: Yes. For me, because of the space I manage to paint and to get inspired. Norway is good for my artistic journey. Also, it is really a good starting to know people to understand another part of the world and also to understand how we are different and how even our problems are totally different. And how our sadness could be the same volume and the same meaning as the pain of the war. People here die of depression. They die of suicide. They die with a lot of things — with the drugs or whatever. The people in Sudan, they die of starving, with the war, or with the gangs. But at the end of the day, they are both lost in themselves. They are dying. They do not exist anymore. So, I mean all suffering is a war in itself. Also, it's a good understanding for me. Because I can understand. Because many people if they live in a poor situation, they think life is like that. They think they are the only people who are suffering. But then you go out and there are other people.

BOOZER: You can get a broader perspective.

SHATTA: Yes. I am happy to experience that. Not only to live and to listen, but I am part of this system too. There are things you can't learn through reading. You have to live it. This is what I can say.

3 *Yanni* is a filler used in spoken Arabic equivalent to "like" or "you know" in English.

BOOZER: What impact do you hope your art has on others?

SHATTA: Because I paint from my soul, I believe in that. I don't know. I believe in my feelings. There are some things, even for me I do not understand, but I can see it in the way I love my art and the way other people love my art.

BOOZER: You just want for them to enjoy it and get what they want from it. Is that right?

SHATTA: No, it's not only like that. I really love my art. For me, I need it, I feel the beauty of it. And when people see that too, I see it more and I appreciate that. Wow! It means a lot to me. I attract someone through my art.

BOOZER: That it's having an impact, someone's finding meaning in it, and making a connection with you? That it helps you see your art in a new way?

SHATTA: Yes. And that's beautiful — wow — What I'm trying to say is, yeah, I appreciate that. Art, it comes from the soul. It is the language of the heart, so when people like my art it makes me feel I am honest when I am painting and when I am drawing. And also, it connects me. For instance, my art is like research. When I start a painting, I start to search. I like to go deep, and deep, and deep. And even it connects me, especially the project I'm working on now which is about history, about humans, about Sudan, Nubia, about many things. But also — wow — it's a sign of how those people find me and my art. Why me? That's why I'm saying I believe in this art.

BOOZER: How do you see art contributing to a feeling of home among the people who have been displaced due to the current war? Does art have a place in giving people a feeling of home?

SHATTA: I know we have war in Sudan. But I can't speak for any artist, but in a way, an artist needs time to observe. You can always paint. You know this painting? This is the first painting I made just about Sudan (figure 13) after I went to Cairo after one year. I campaigned about war, I campaigned about war, but I didn't feel it. You see? But me, in Cairo, I couldn't ignore it. That's why I made this painting. Because of what is going on in Sudan. It makes me have to try to understand the whole thing, how we came to this war, just to attack. To attack what is going on. Because for me, what comes out, it is part of the solution. You see now, this is part of the solution. And it is part of the problem. It's a lot of things. It's the politics. It's many things. But at the same time, art is the witness of the time. From person to person, it is different. But I don't feel I can speak about this question

Figure 13. "15th April Panic – Battle of Khartoum 2023" (Khalid Shatta, 2024).

in Sudan, but still I paint. I paint. I painted this painting because this is how I see the pain of war. But also, in a way, I guess I need to be careful also to use the art in a good way. Because now we are in a war, I am worried about Sudan... but I am not there yet. I prefer just to let it come naturally. This painting is about Sudan. And maybe critiquing the homescape because for people this is how they are feeling.

BOOZER: Their disconnect and the swarm of thoughts about war no matter where they are.

SHATTA: Yes.

BOOZER: Are there any new mediums or projects you'd like to explore?

SHATTA: Yeah, actually, last month, I was in Portugal. I went for a community called "Sacred Activism." I think now I'm looking to get in more communities. So, I need just to spend a lot of time with many indigenous communities. Because, one day I want to do this in Sudan. I felt this was something I really needed. I feel very connected with that. To be with a community. To be more spiritual with people. Tamira, it

is a place in Portugal. The founder is German. Now they are just creating space. Most of the people are from Israel, the United States, Germany, from Portugal, from Brazil. They create space just to grieve, to express themselves in art and rituals and love and sexuality and power. It's a lot of things. So, this is what I'm exploring.

BOOZER: You're always exploring.

SHATTA: Yes.