

Palo Gallery Presents
Hafsa Nouman: *Facsimile*
21 East 3rd Street, New York, NY 10003
18 June 2026 – 27 June 2026
Opening Reception: Thursday, 18 June 2026 | 6 – 8 PM



Hafsa Nouman *Dastarkhwaan*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

Palo Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of **Hafsa Nouman's** exhibition ***Facsimile***.

The exhibition takes its name from the *dastarkhwaan*, a traditional floor-spread used across Central and South Asia for communal eating. Derived from Persian, the term refers both to the cloth itself and to the larger social act of gathering around food. Spread across the ground, the *dastarkhwaan* creates a shared space of hospitality, cleanliness, and collective presence.

In Nouman's central artwork, the *dastarkhwaan* is approached not merely as a domestic object, but as a spatial and social structure. Unlike the architecture of the dining table, which provides preset hierarchies and assigned positions, the *dastarkhwaan* expands horizontally: elastic in capacity and able to accommodate whoever arrives.

“The work is a 13 x 7 ft acrylic painting on canvas functioning as a facsimile of the tablecloth from my maternal grandmother Bibi's house in Gujranwala, Pakistan: a gingham pattern composed of black, red, green, and white. Until the age of six, before the demolition of the house, every summer meal was eaten on the *dastarkhwaan* spread across the floor of Bibi's lounge. We, the children, gathered on the ground while the elders sat nearby at the dining table. The work returns to this memory not as nostalgia, but as a way of tracing how acts of eating also produce forms of relation, hierarchy, intimacy, and belonging.”

— Hafsa Nouman

Over time, the *dastarkhwaan* gradually disappeared from many urban middle-class homes, increasingly associated with a perceived lack of refinement. As dining tables came to signify upward mobility, propriety, and modernity, floor-based communal eating became folded into classed ideas of etiquette and respectability. Revisiting the *dastarkhwaan* at a larger scale, Nouman reflects on the quiet disappearance of vernacular forms of gathering and on the cultural and political values embedded within domestic habits and objects.

Through painting, *Facsimile* reconsiders the social architectures of eating and asks what forms of community are lost when intimacy becomes formalized through furniture, status, and spatial division.

Inspired by Allama Iqbal's poems *Hamdardi* and *Jugnu*, works frequently narrated and performed within the artist's childhood home but with Noumans' father's voice echoing alongside her grandmother's, the exhibition considers how allegory is carried through acts of repetition, storytelling, and gathering. The poems speak to knowledge, sacrifice, hope, resilience, and the limits of human perception. Nouman is drawn not toward a nostalgic recovery of the atmosphere they evoke, but toward the changing material and social conditions that once allowed such forms of collective narration and attention to emerge.



Hafsa Nouman, *What is the Desired Fruit?*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

The exhibition also includes a series of fruit paintings depicting species indigenous to specific regions once shaped by colonial occupation, including olive, pomegranate, and sugarcane. These fruits function simultaneously as agricultural forms, cultural memory, and political signifiers, accumulating layered associations around resistance, displacement, labor, and survival. Rather than operating as fixed symbols, they appear as unstable images whose meanings shift across historical and geopolitical contexts.

Living within the gallery space is a tree form derived from a Sycamore Maple, a species commonly found in urban landscapes. Constructed from starched muslin glazed with oil paint, it operates simultaneously as index and imitation. Throughout the exhibition, painting becomes a

site where memory, ecology, and representation are translated into facsimiles, surfaces that preserve traces of what can no longer be encountered directly.

Facsimile opens with a celebratory reception with the artist on Thursday, June 18, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Palo Gallery, located at 21 East 3rd Street, New York City.

About the Artist



Hafsa Nouman (b. 1998, Lahore) is a Pakistani visual artist based in New Haven, Connecticut. Her practice engages memory, ecology, and decolonial inquiry through painting and installation. Having lived within economies shaped by IMF-led reform and neoliberal extraction, she approaches decolonisation as a mirage, a horizon structured by desire, always visible yet endlessly deferred.

Nouman's works exist both as an image and a withheld object, structurally present yet visually inaccessible. Through reflective surfaces that glimmer and oscillate, she complicates flatness and destabilises the act of looking. The viewer is positioned not as a passive observer, but as an implicated witness, confronted with the conditions that govern visibility, preservation, and loss.

About Palo Gallery

Palo Gallery was established in 2018 in New York City by third-generation art collector Paul Henkel with a focus on academic and historically contextualized contemporary art. Scholarship and historical canon are at the forefront in the consideration of each group, solo or duo exhibition. The gallery program's curatorial focus aims to frame contemporary art within the context of art and social history, and are committed to offering artists unique opportunities to elaborate on these concerns.

Originating as a pop-up, the gallery opened its flagship location, designed by Selldorf Architects, on Bond Street in NoHo in September 2022, offering 3,400 square feet of exhibition space, giving artists the opportunity to work on a large scale. In June 2024, Palo's second location in New York City opened in the East Village, serving as a more intimate space for emerging artists and experimental exhibitions to have their own spotlight. Today, the gallery continues to

showcase thematic presentations, offering artists a unique opportunity to explore pivotal, intersecting cultural and historical topics.

Current & Upcoming Exhibitions

Yuval Pudik: Time Takes a Cigarette
21 East 3rd Street
2 April to 25 April 2026

Lewinale Havette: I Love It When You Beg
21 East 3rd Street
2 May to 6 June 2026

Media Contacts

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