

Fascist Desert Dessert

Emily Drew Miller
Tel Aviv, Israel

Acrylic and oil on Canvas, 100 x 75 cm, 2017-2018

Artist's note: This work was started in Israel and finished in the US. This is correlated with the subjects of the paintings: the leaders Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump. Finishing it in America was a significant part of the painting process.

Fascist Desert Dessert depicts the sprawling, open desert hills of the West Bank with an actual dessert that was served to Donald and Melania Trump and Benjamin and Sara Netanyahu during President Trump's visit to Israel in 2017. The image of the dessert, created by the chef Moshe Segev, disturbed me: It shows the two leaders' facial profiles as part of the board of a chess game with chess-piece-shaped mounds of halva, praline, and white chocolate mousses. By equating Netanyahu and Trump with the game of chess, the dessert contends that the men are regal, intelligent, and deeply strategic players on the world stage. The ominous dark profiles of them in this strategic light, placed over the West Bank landscape, are how I communicate my fear of their alliance: They are both thirsty for settlement expansion to appease their voter bases without concern for the implications of their actions for decades to come.

The depiction of the dessert is tight and orderly, while the strokes and textures of the West Bank landscape are loose, flowing, and lawless—wild like it exists in reality.

