

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

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In the News

Azerbaijani artist's Passing By... exhibition due in New York

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By Amina Nazarli

Aida Mahmudova's first solo exhibition in the United States, *Passing By...*, will be on view at Leila Heller Gallery on May 28 – July 3, 2015.

The exhibition will feature eight new paintings that build on the themes of nostalgia and memory found in her past work and draw inspiration from landscape and architecture of Azerbaijan, where she currently lives and works.

Mahmudova animates the surface of the canvas drawing attention to both the process of painting and the material qualities of the paint itself. Mahmudova plays with depth, perspective and scale, creating large-scale scenes that draw in the viewer. A structure of bold planes of color is combined with layers of textured brushstrokes. The painted surface is further animated and enlivened with the addition of materials such as polyurethane foam over which an impasto application of paint is applied to build volume.

In this series of paintings, Mahmudova explores the idea of impermanence. The works provide glimpses of Azerbaijan's natural surroundings, urban environment and architecture—a backdrop that is undergoing constant and rapid change. Where one expects to see contrasting images of gleaming new construction alongside historic vestiges of Islamic architecture, Mahmudova instead focuses on modest structures on the peripheries of urban centers as they compete and coalesce with the native foliage. By placing these overlooked local scenes to the forefront of her work, she examines the diversity of her homeland. Imbued with a sense of tender nostalgia, her works offer a socio-anthropological perspective of an evolving urban landscape.

A central component of Mahmudova's work is her exploration of memory, its links to identity, and how they both can be continually altered and re-remembered over time. She explains, "The scenes in my paintings have a strong personal resonance, combining places within Baku with those remembered and imagined. Each view captures a moment of stillness against a backdrop that is constantly changing." This tension between fiction and reality in her paintings is recreated by merging abstract and figurative forms, creating images that are both inviting and disorientating.

The venues address is 568 West 25th Street, New York.