

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Strasnick, Stephanie. "See Azerbaijani Artist Aida Mahmudova's First U.S. Exhibition." *Architectural Digest*. (June 3, 2015).

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

DAILY AD

SEE AZERBAIJANI ARTIST AIDA MAHMUDOVA'S FIRST U.S. EXHIBITION

Text by Stephanie Strasnick | Photography courtesy of the artist and Yay Gallery | June 3, 2015



The Neighbors, 2015, Aida Mahmudova.

Currently on view at Leila Heller Gallery in New York is "Passing By . . .," the first U.S. exhibition of works by Aida Mahmudova, the founder and creative director of YARAT, a non-profit dedicated to promoting contemporary Azerbaijani art. Known for working with the themes of nostalgia and memory, she offers seven new oversize paintings that highlight the architecture and natural landscape of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, where the artist was born and currently lives.



Mulberry, 2015.

Through thick, abstract applications of paint and polyurethane foam, Mahmudova transforms the surface of her canvases into lush, dreamy, three-dimensional planes. The nearly five-and-a-half-by-seven-foot painting *Mulberry*, for instance, features blobs of green, pink, and purple paint that appear to leap from the canvas toward the viewer, like a photograph being brought to life.



Rambling Vine, 2015.

"Mahmudova's intention in and through her creation is not solely pointed towards the final result of the artistic process, i.e. the picture itself, but is also a defense and consolidation of her identity through the artistic elaboration of memory," says art historian Dr. Zoltán Somhegyi.

Other works, such as *Rambling Vine*, are hazier and more abstract. In it, flowers and vines wind through the bottom half of the canvas, while the top half is a gray blur. The perceived depth of the painting, so weighty and profound, creates the illusion that if we look hard enough, the rest of the scene will appear.

Through July 3 at Leila Heller Gallery, 568 West 25th Street, New York; leilahellergallery.com