Naeemeh Kazemi
Bubble Land

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Naeemeh Kazemi: Aquatics of Refuge and Revelation

In the realm of contemporary art, few endeavors are as audacious as the creation of new worlds. Iranian artist Naeemeh Kazemi, a former sculptor turned painter, accomplishes this with a visionary precision that blurs the lines between discovery and invention. Her upcoming exhibition at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai unveils Bubble Land, a series that plunges viewers into the labyrinthine depths of the ocean and the human condition marking a striking evolution from her earlier La La Land series, which featured the endless uncertainty of mortal concern. Through her work, Kazemi invites us not merely to observe, but to wander, to lose ourselves in the intricate tapestries of realms that oscillate between void and spectacle.

Her work centers its escape from reality in its visual deception: her mastery of oil and the depth of her erosion make for an ease for the very to melt and become again in her worlds. It's a departure from formal hyperrealism: she scoffs at and confronts reality with a jarring, unwinding travel into a reality she's forced your hand into, for you can't deny its substance and presence.

Kazemi's La La Land emerged as a sanctuary forged in solitude. Amid the claustrophobia of pandemic lockdowns, geopolitical turmoil, and the dissolution of her sculptural practice a 15-year endeavor abruptly halted she turned to painting as both refuge and reckoning. The endless, horrifying expanse of the ocean is the new reality she entraps us in, beyond the stupefying nature of her hyperrealism. She both relieves the viewer of their worldly problems while sinking them into another universe under the ocean. She meets the viewer with a choice: you can escape, for a moment, into my world but you must contend with my void.

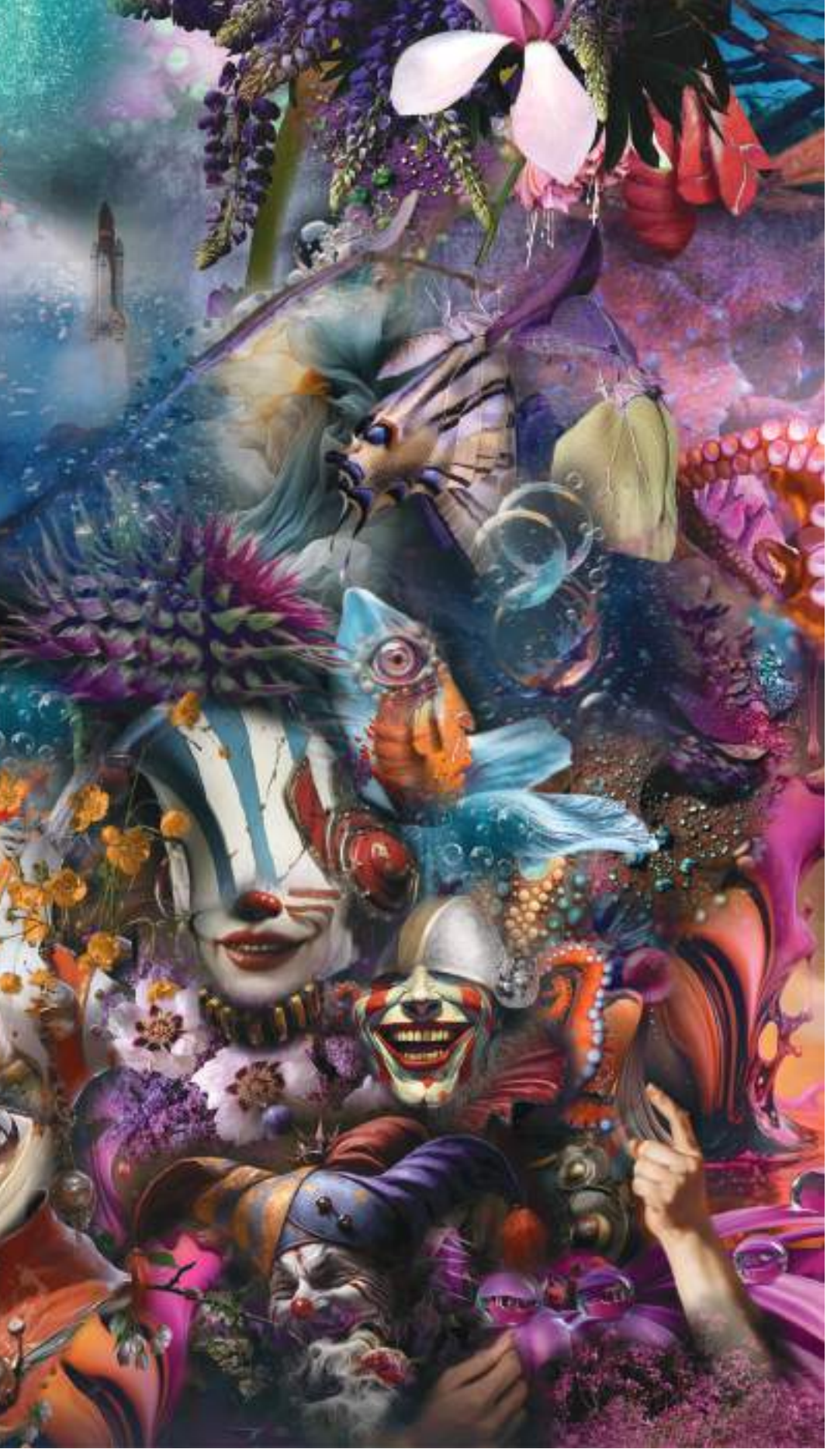
If La La Land was a retreat inward, Bubble Land is a confrontation with the cacophony beyond. Post-quarantine reality, for Kazemi, mirrors a disorienting carnival a realm of clamor, absurdity, and performative masks. Translating this vision into the ocean's abyss, she renders the deep sea not as tranquil void but as a teeming theater of entanglement. Bioluminescent creatures morph into carnivalesque figures; tentacles intertwine with confetti-like bubbles; faces flicker between grins and grimaces. The ocean, infinitely mysterious, becomes a metaphor for contemporary existence: a place where laughter masks fragility, and chaos conceals fragile pockets of order.

Kazemi's clown-like figures, adrift in this aqueous circus, evoke both the grotesque and the sublime. Their exaggerated smiles reminiscent of Ensor's masks or Picasso's harlequins hint at the dissonance between societal performance and internal tumult. Yet within the chaos, there is respite: the bubbles, translucent and buoyant, suggest moments of fleeting relief, temporary shelters in a world unmoored.

A question often posed to Kazemi why the obsessive detail, the relentless filling of every centimeter reveals the core of her practice. She describes her canvases as "snapshots" of discovered realms, captured with the fidelity of a documentarian. Each swirl, creature, and shadow is not embellishment but evidence, a fossil of the worlds she unearths. A speckled fish's eye might reflect a half-hidden face; a cluster of seaweed could unravel into calligraphic script. The density is deliberate, an invitation to look closer, to decode the artist's cartography of hidden narratives.

Kazemi's journey from La La Land to Bubble Land mirrors a universal trajectory: the shift from inward sheltering to outward grappling. Yet her worlds remain linked by a refusal to simplify. In an era of soundbites and scrolling, her paintings demand slowness, rewarding those who linger with revelations both intimate and expansive. As we navigate the layered currents of Bubble Land, we are reminded that art, at its most potent, does not provide answers it immerses us in better questions.

It is on view at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai from April to September.



Bubble Land

2024

2025

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 160 x 240 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 160 x 260 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 220 x 160 cm

From Sketch design to color

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 160 x 200 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 160 x 210 cm

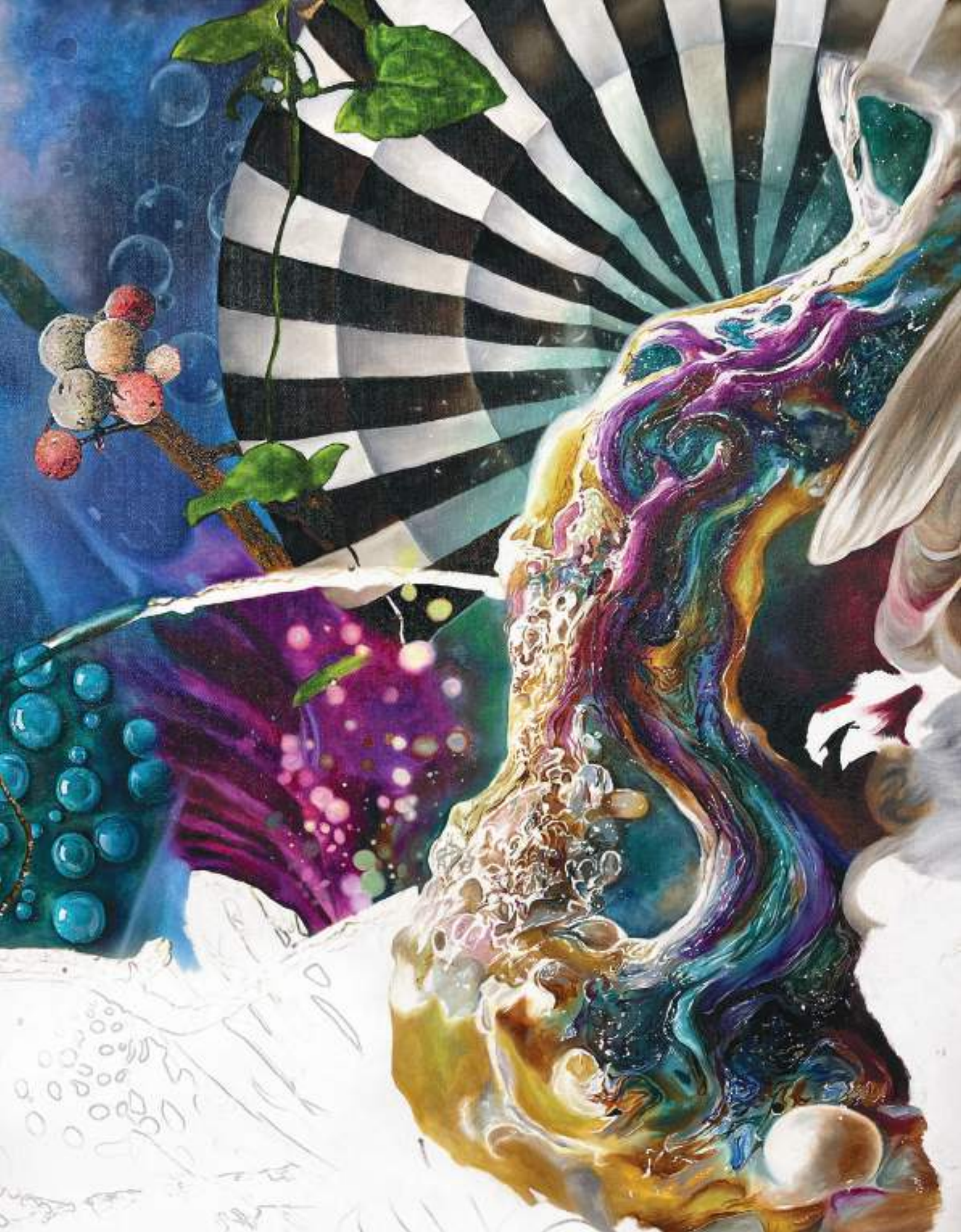
Bubble Land Series Detail of Artwork Oil on Canvas

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 160 x 225 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 90 x 85 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 90 x 85 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 90 x 110 cm

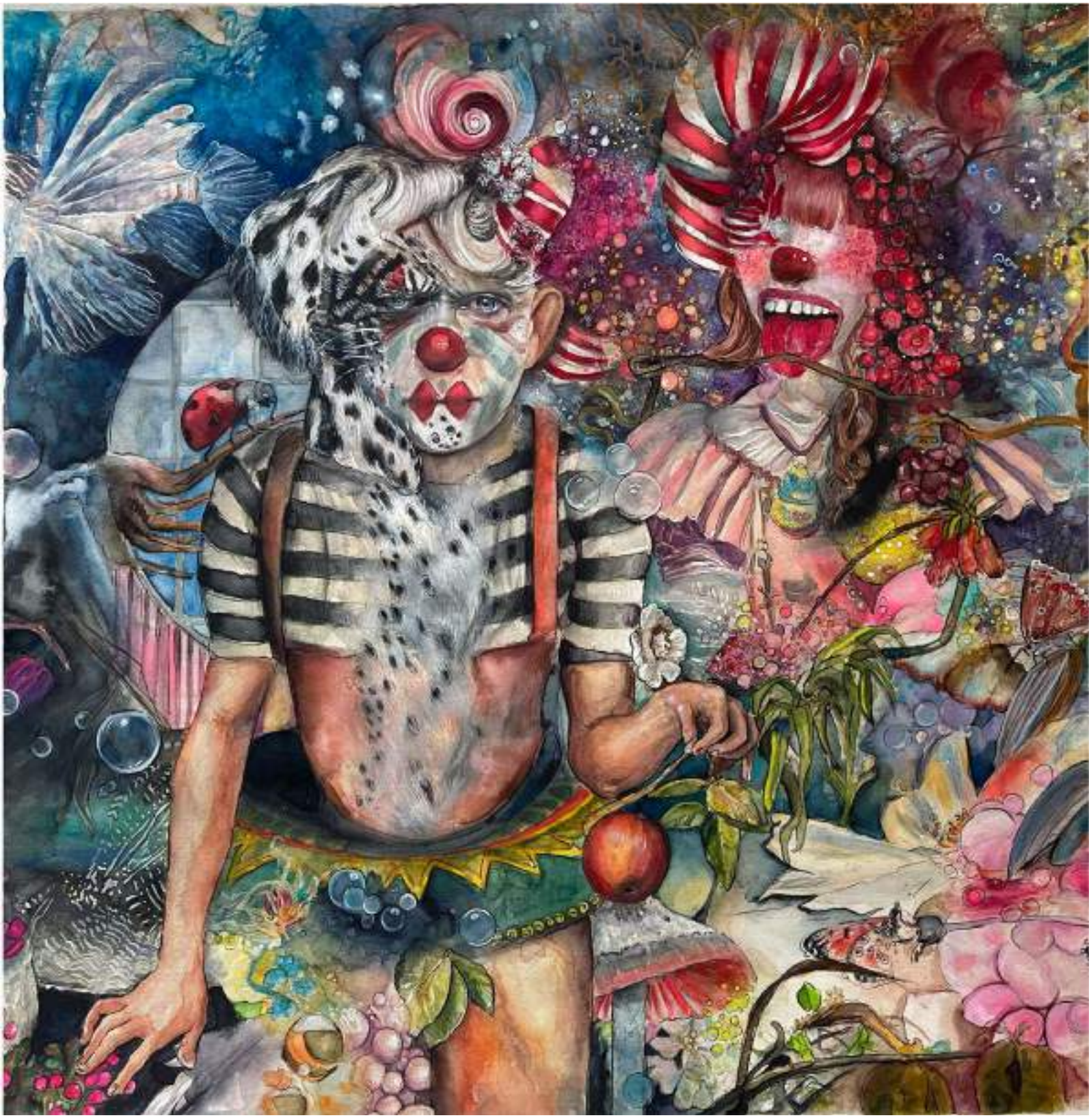


LaLa Land Series 2025 Oil on Canvas 30 x 85 cm

LaLa Land series, Watercolor on cardboard, 45x50 cm, 2025

LaLa Land series, Watercolor on cardboard, 37x40 cm, 2025

LaLa Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 55 x 65 cm



Bubble Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 45 x 45 cm

Bubble Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 45 x 45 cm

LaLa Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 45 x 40 cm

LaLa Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 18 x 34 cm

LaLa Land series 2025 Oil on Canvas 55 x 65 cm

LaLa Land series 2025 Watercolour on Cardboard 40 x 50 cm

Prelude to Futureland 2024 Oil on Canvas 160 x 85 cm, 160 x 160 cm, 160 x 85 cm

NOAH BECKER'S
WHITEHOT MAGAZINE
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE
MARCH 2025
"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

Naeemeh Kazemi at Leila Heller Gallery

Naeemeh Kazemi, Untitled, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 150 x 200 cm

JONATHAN GOODMAN

Jonathan Goodman is a writer in New York who has written for Artcritical, Artery and the Brooklyn Rail among other publications.

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By JONATHAN GOODMAN October Ist, 2023
Naeemeh Kazemi is a painter living on the outskirts of Tehran. She travels to Dubai so regularly, the artist considers Dubai a second home. As it now stands, Kazemi lives in a small, three-room house some distance from the city; her studio is a drive away from home.
Kazemi is an artist of high competence, mixing and merging a broad array of cultures by varying her influences. Flora abound, often displaying strong reds as the dominant part of the paintings color. But the scope of hues Nazemi employs is broader than that. Other copies of Western art, including historical figures, such as St. Sebastian and portraits of younger women whose demeanor and style of dress lead back to the European art historical (Netherlandish) period. The mixture of bright, mostly sharply defined plant forms, along with the artist's use of art historical figures, leads to an understanding of art as far more open than the situation might seem to an untrained eye.
All the paintings on show are untitled, and all were made in 2023. In one, the details are nearly overwhelming: an egret, standing off to the right side; underneath the placement of the bird is a beautifully rendered younger woman in profile, who looks across the airy densities of space and imaginative weight that are an integral part of the picture. In the upper right, a group of daisies flourishes while deep in the bottom left, a handsome young man his demeanor, presenting great energy, display an otlook very much alive- even if we see only his left eye, uninhibitedly gazing at the audience. The flowers, berries, and
leaves, too many to enumerate or describe individually, create an atmosphere of fecund disorganization, forcing Kazemi's audience to make sense of something that vividly seems out of control. The way she solves the problem is to define the forms she uses in a manner that emphasizes the homogeneous disposition of the image, incorporating visual discipline into work that resists such discipline- at least at first glance.
In the second painting too, the emphasis is on nature, scattered randomly in close to anarchic fashion. But also in this work, a figure wearing ornate clothing and a long, thick yellow beard sits close by to what is pretty certainly a cockatoo, with a sharp crest. The bird. is eating a brown bug, which seems to be slipping from the fingers of an anonymous hand.
Thê image, simple enough at first glance, is not without a sharp suggestion of violence-thus becoming an illustration undermining the rich beauty of most of the painting. This is chiefly brought about by the remarkable skill of the artist-a skill that separates her from the often deliberately disorganized, more conceptually considered art of Americans. They tend to leave craft behind, while the art of Kazemi and other Iranian crowded in their variety to be easily categorized, takes us by surprise via their numbers-and include small, delicate, intensely blue flowers; there are also animals sometimes difficult to recognize. And leaves spread across the width of the composition offer thick cover-for example, a set of white fronds dominates the upper register of the painting.

NAEEMEH KAZEMI b. 1981. Tehran, Iran
Naeemeh Kazemi, a distinguished artist from Tehran, Iran, is celebrated for her captivating explorations across diverse artistic mediums. Kazemi received her M. A. in Painting from Alzahra University.

Kazemi's artistic journey began as a sculptor, where her meticulous craftsmanship breathed life into intricate forms that resonated with a sense of wonder and curiosity. Recognizing the profound impact of children's art, she participated as an expert in Iran's Cultural Exchange Project, delving into the nuanced perspectives of young imaginations. This immersive experience would later find embodiment in her early sculptures, where she exquisitely captured the peculiar facets of childhood imagination.

The pandemic induced lockdown of 2020 prompted a shift towards painting, giving rise to the lush and allegorical "LaLaLand" series. Through vivid symbolism and references to classical art, Kazemi's canvases resonate with themes of environmental concern, Covid anxiety, feminism, and the complexity of human experience, inviting viewers to contemplate the intricate interplay between fantasy and reality.

Kazemi's artistic vision is not confined to the visual realm; it extends into the realm of consciousness and perception, inviting introspection into how we interpret the world. As she navigates the delicate balance between disconnection and connectivity, her works serve as a testament to the human psyche amidst uncertainty.

Anchored in the belief that meaning is a dynamic and ever-changing construct, Kazemi's art becomes a conduit for introspection and exploration. Her canvases resonate with questions inquiries into the fundamental nature of existence and humanity's intricate dance with the world.

EDUCATION
B. A., Elmo Farhang University, Painting
M. A., Alzahra University, Painting

ORGANIZATIONS
Member of Association of Iranian Painters Member of the Iran Visual Art Institute
Member of Institute for The Protection of Artists, Journalists and Writers

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Front cover image:
Untitled
Bubble Land series
2025
Oil on Canvas
220 x 160 cm

Back cover image:
Untitled
Bubble Land series
2025
Oil on Canvas
160 x 200 cm

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