



LEILA HELLER

LaLaLand
NAEMEH KAZEMI

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LEILA HELLER.

17 East 76th St., Garden Level
New York, NY 10021
T.: +1 (212) 249-7695
F.: +1 (212) 249-7693
www.LeilaHellerGallery.com

Leila Heller, President
Ella Schwartz, Director
Marvin Doctor, Registrar and Preparator

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Images courtesy of the Artist, Naeemeh Kazemi

LaLaLand

Beginning her creative journey as a sculptor, Naeemeh Kazemi turned to painting in 2020, sparked by the constraints of lockdown and unable to get to her studio, she transformed her one-bedroom apartment into a sanctuary of imagination. In Kazemi's *LaLaLand* series, she invites viewers into a dreamscape of intricate allegories and deep contemplation.

Living in Iran, Kazemi masterfully utilizes symbols to convey her messages, avoiding potential conflict with the government. Her paintings disguise complex themes with motifs drawn from the natural world, classical art, and everyday objects as each brushstroke finds its place on the canvas.

Initially, viewers are greeted by the flourishing flora, fauna, and enchanting colors. As Kazemi articulates, "Tense dreamy moments occur, rushing blood to my cheeks." The vivid hues extend an invitation into this "dreamy" realm. However, upon closer inspection, to illustrate the feelings that Kazemi describes as, "a moment later, silent, unsure, tired, and depressed," camouflaged within the canvases are portraits of mysterious figures obscured by hands or foliage—an eerie spectacle. This juxtaposition of emotions permeates the canvas, mirroring the interplay of the artist's own feelings. A delicate dance between vitality and contemplative solitude, her work reflects the struggle between tension and tranquility. As aptly put by Art Basel, a sense of being "wholly suffocated by a too-bright, too-lush, tangled web of plant and animal life" resonates, reminding us of the vulnerability of our existence.

In *LaLaLand*, Kazemi presents a world of paradoxes—interconnected yet fragmented, familiar yet alien. It invites viewers to ponder the profound questions that underpin Kazemi's work: "Could the whole history of the world be a mere misunderstanding? Is it possible that man, with all his discoveries, developments, culture, religion, and global wisdom, is just lingering on only to the outward of life?" These inquiries reflect Kazemi's feelings and anxieties, of the ecological crisis, feminism, and humanism, which are further amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. For her, Kazemi's canvases serve as an oasis, a realm where questions find solace and fears are temporarily subdued.

From the fragility of the planet to the depths of personal introspection, *LaLaLand* embodies an evolving narrative, a reminder that the search for meaning is a universal endeavor. As one immerses themselves in the world she has crafted, a captivating synthesis of symbolism and introspection, Kazemi offers viewers a mirror through which to engage with their own perceptions and emotions. Her work transcends the confines of visual representation, resonating as a poignant dialogue between artist and audience, inviting us all to explore the intricate landscapes of the human experience.

"Fear swirls like dreaded particles in the air, inhaled with every ragged breath, it begins to leak from every pore, hardening all that it touches. Screams of displeasure fill the air as the world hurtles on through space, cyclical in the unrelenting chaos. This civilization is being torn to pieces now more than ever, the throwaway culture thriving as the only living tissue found in its remains. I constantly think to myself, could the whole history of the world possibly hinge on a simple misunderstanding?"

*Is it possible that the existence of man, rife with discoveries, developments, culture, religion and wisdom, still lingers on the periphery of meaning? Yes, it is possible! To be alone with such awareness of the superficiality of life leaves little room for amusement. I'm incredibly scared, because I know we'll soon annihilate this singular life-giving planet. Soon our home will be nothing but a shell of skulls, bones, and dead machines. We can't do anything for her.
We lost the game!*

Thus, I am anxious and I believe one must act upon this feeling before it mutates into fear. Frustratingly, in life, sometimes a situation has no remedy. However, the human soul seeks contentment and because of this I must get to work and engage with my surroundings. I look for things that my situation lacks, hopeful to find relief from the many torments of this life. It is in the space between where I am and where I could be, that I find shreds of optimism. In my mind's eye, I find a land where the laws of nature begin to wiggle and weave under the pressure of my imagination. I see everything existing in a state of perpetual flux; formed from unique combination of unpredictable and unrepeatable circumstances. There is no room for the authoritarian acts of man. This flux is what provides hope and purpose, as our old world is continually reborn through inevitable change. The ontological fabric of meaning is relentlessly called into question providing an antidote to the chaos.

The paradoxical truth that truth does not exist provides space for unity amongst those who can bare to speak in the language of the uncertain. The result will be a consolidated identity where the "la-la land" appears. In this space, I can come back to myself, there is a tranquility and I feel refreshed. Everything I know comes into question and is torn up before my eyes. Little by little I am learning to see. I am obsessive in my desire to blend the internal and external parts of myself; the visceral unforgiving organic aspects of existence with the expansive fluid mysticism of consciousness.

I am calmer now. Imagining a new world brings me a sense of unbridled joy, but the awareness of perpetual change brings new challenges. One moment I am restless, eager, hopeful, and enthusiastic, a moment later, silent, unsure, tired, and depressed, as if the pieces of my life have caught a new light and mutated in a strange unfamiliar way.

I breathe better now, busy watching my la-la land; I tread lightly, and somehow untroubled..."

— Naeemeh Kazemi



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2023
Oil on Canvas
170 x 160 cm. / 66.93 x 62.99in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2022
Oil on Canvas
150 x 150 cm. / 59.06 x 59.06 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2023
Oil on Canvas
150 x 200 cm. / 59.06 x 78.74 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2022
Oil on Canvas
150 x 200 cm. / 59.06 x 78.74 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2022
Oil on Canvas
150 x 200 cm. / 59.06 x 78.74 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2023
Oil on Canvas
170 x 160 cm. / 66.93 x 62.99 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2023
Oil on Canvas
140 x 160 cm. / 55.12 x 62.99 in.



Untitled (LaLaLand Series), 2023
Oil on Canvas
150 x 160 cm. / 59.06 x 62.99 in.

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

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2023	<i>LaLaLand</i> , Leila Heller, New York, NY, USA	2010	Painting Group Exhibition, Kamaledin Behzad Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2023	Contemporary Istanbul, Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey	2009	<i>Colors for Green</i> , Mellat Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2023	<i>Land of Honey</i> , Leila Heller, New York, NY, USA	2009	Painting Exhibition, Laleh Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2023	Art Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE	2008	Dr. Sandouzi Design Biennial, Tehran, Iran
2022	<i>LaLaLand</i> , Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE	2008	Association of Iranian Painters Exhibition, Niavaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2022	Contemporary Istanbul, Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey	2007	Painting Exhibition, Majd Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2022	Abu Dhabi Art, Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE	2004-08	Supervisor of the Cultural Exchange Project of Children of Iran and the Netherlands, Center for The Artistic Creation of Children & Young Adults, Kanoon, International Affairs, Tehran, Iran
2022	Art Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE	2004	Painting Group Exhibition, Laleh Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2021	Abu Dhabi Art, Leila Heller Gallery, Abu Dhabi, UAE	2003	Biennial of Iran Contemporary Design, Barg Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2021	Art Dubai, Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, UAE	2002	The Drawing Exhibition of Young Artist, Arasbaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2018	Art for Peace Festival, Tehran, Iran		
2018	<i>Art & Fashion</i> , Shirin Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran		
2016	Istanbul Biennial, Shirin Art Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey		
2015	Group Sculpture Exhibition, Seyhoon Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran		
2014	The Mine Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE		
2014	<i>Contemporary Arab</i> , Iranian & Turkish Art Exhibition, Pro Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE		
2014	Art 14, London, Shirin Art Gallery, London, England		
2013	Scope Basel, Shirin Art Gallery, Basel, Switzerland		
2013	Scope Miami Beach, Shirin Art Gallery NY, Miami, FL, USA		
2013	<i>Peace From the Bottom of My Art</i> , Opera Gallery London, Dubai, UAE		
2013	Art Dubai, Opera Gallery London, Dubai, UAE		
2012	Selected Artist, <i>Magic Of Persia</i> , Salsali Museum, Dubai, UAE		
2010	Fine Art Group Exhibition, Art Center, Tehran, Iran		

