

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

## 'To Live Boldly, To Love Wildly' by Shan Castelino



*Blushing petals among a Neptune sky; Oil on canvas; 180x150 cm*

Dubai, UAE – Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present *To Live Boldly, To Love Wildly*, a solo exhibition by Shan Castelino. Opening in Dubai in August 8<sup>th</sup> 2026

*"Nature taught me that nothing truly breaks. It transforms."* — **Shan Castelino**. Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present *To Live Boldly, To Love Wildly*, the debut solo exhibition by Shan Castelino, unveiling a new body of paintings that explores resilience, memory, transformation, and the enduring dialogue between humanity and the natural world.

For Shan Castelino, painting begins long before the first mark is made. It begins in memory. Growing up amidst dense forests, winding rivers, monsoon rains, and an ever-changing landscape, she experienced nature not simply as an environment but as a companion, refuge, and teacher. In the quiet rhythms of the natural world, she discovered lessons that would later become the foundation of her artistic language: that strength can exist without force, that vulnerability carries its own power, and that every ending contains the possibility of renewal.

These early experiences remained with her throughout nearly three decades in Dubai, where she built a distinguished career within the international art world. Working at Christie's and collaborating closely with some of the most celebrated contemporary artists of our time, Castelino gained a rare perspective on artistic practice, materiality, and the emotional possibilities of abstraction. While the works of Gerhard Richter, Jackson Pollock, and Yayoi Kusama expanded her understanding of contemporary painting, they ultimately encouraged her to return to her own story.

That story unfolds throughout *To Live Boldly, To Love Wildly*. Built through successive layers of paint, texture, gesture, and light, the paintings reveal themselves gradually. Botanical forms emerge before dissolving into luminous fields of color. Leaves become fragments of memory. Water suggests movement, surrender, and healing. The surface itself records time, with each layer preserving traces of experiences that can never be erased but continue to shape what follows.

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Rather than depicting landscapes, Castelino paints emotional terrains. Nature is never treated as scenery. Instead, it becomes a living metaphor for the human condition. Forests embody endurance. Rivers speak of adaptation. Organic forms mirror the cycles of growth, loss, and regeneration that define every life. Each painting invites viewers to slow their gaze, discovering that what first appears abstract gradually reveals an intimate language of remembrance.

The exhibition's title reflects the philosophy that runs throughout the work. To live boldly is not to live without fear, but to move forward despite it. To love wildly is not about excess; it is the courage to remain open, compassionate, and deeply connected, even after disappointment, grief, or change. Together, these ideas become an affirmation of resilience—not as an act of resistance, but as an acceptance of transformation itself.

Castelino's paintings celebrate the quiet strength found in vulnerability. Their richly layered surfaces remind us that identity is never fixed; it is accumulated through experience, shaped by memory, and renewed through hope. As light gradually emerges from beneath dense textures, the works suggest that beauty is rarely found in perfection, but in everything that has endured.

With *To Live Boldly, To Love Wildly*, Shan Castelino presents a deeply personal yet universally resonant body of work that invites reflection on courage, belonging, healing, and the profound wisdom of the natural world. The exhibition marks the emergence of a distinctive contemporary voice whose practice transforms lived experience into spaces of contemplation, inviting viewers to reconsider not only their relationship with nature, but also with themselves.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shan Castelino is a contemporary abstract artist based between Dubai and India. After nearly three decades immersed in the international art world, including an extensive career at Christie's and senior positions within leading contemporary galleries, she has developed a practice grounded in memory, resilience, and the transformative power of nature.

Inspired by the forests and rivers of her childhood, her paintings translate personal histories into layered abstractions where organic forms become metaphors for healing, endurance, and renewal. Through richly textured surfaces and an intuitive process of accumulation and erasure, Castelino explores the fragile yet enduring relationship between humanity and the natural world. This exhibition marks her debut solo presentation and introduces an important new voice in contemporary abstraction.

## ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over four decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western, Central Asian, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European, and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 16,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East. In addition to presenting a dynamic exhibition schedule, Leila Heller Gallery actively organizes shows with world renowned curators, hosts educational panels and film screenings, and produces catalogs and books with scholarly essays. Each year the gallery participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects as a platform for exploring new conversations within a wider context of galleries, artists and institutions. Gallery artists have consistently participated in international museum exhibitions and biennials, and are included in leading institutional collections worldwide.