

Ida Badal

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September 19 - October 17, 2026

Drawn to formal harmony and grounded color, Ida Badal's paintings have an immediate quality of meditative droning textures, with the compositional consistency of crashing waves or blades of grass. They are undoubtedly engaged with the natural world and yet possess a sense of supra-natural order, a quality of prototypical natural appearances and images. Her strategy of abstraction is twofold: distillation into visual essentials and reflective distancing.

She invokes nature through its fundamental visual qualities: light, atmosphere, time, color, texture, pattern, et cetera. In this essentializing pictorialism, an indefinite sense of memory and familiarity emerges. Badal's formalism provides enough reference to nature to evoke its memory, while resisting the experience of any particular place, image, or object. Where traditions of landscape painting insist on specificity (a particular time at a particular place), Badal's paintings move toward something more universal. One work may depict the play of light rippling on the water's surface, a microcosmic network of atoms, a macrocosmic galactic filament. Beyond this capacity for essentializing, Badal considers the limitations of visual experience per se, as a condition of her artistic activity.

The eye is a mediating apparatus. Bees and butterflies, for example, perceive UV light; we cannot. Many flowers have evolved to display patterns in the UV spectrum on their petals, called "nectar guides," which function like runway lights. The world we experience is an impression shaped by the limitations of our own design. Invented technologies—screens being particularly topical in our era, but paintings too—only add further layers between subject and object. But mediation runs deeper than the shadows of invented technology.

Sight and presence are not identical. Seeing may be believing, but belief itself requires a leap of faith, as does painting.

Ida Badal's pictures underscore this space between seeing and presence. The landscape one observes in her paintings is not only universal or essential—often it remains palpably elsewhere. Hard-edged borders interrupt swept and rippling leas of organic color. The whirl of her strokes rests in tension against the lush scenes to which they seem to refer, but to which the viewer is never fully permitted access. The image lingers like a phantom, with familiar contours and rhythm, yet foreign in its basic objectivity. The paintings' mediation is inescapable: Badal presses on the contradiction of felt reality and illusory forms.

In this body of work, she centers on what she calls the "speed" of the paintings. By this she refers to the degree of the swiped edges of color. The speed of her brush swipe transfers into the speed of the works' legibility. This abstraction device invokes the memory of distance over time to instill both the sense of removal and of familiarity. The works wrestle with their appeal in that regard—and yet are appealing. It makes an aesthetic substructure of natural qualities felt, not just known.

James Joyce said that most artworks fall into the trap of either pornography or didacticism. Ninety years later, Dave Hickey made a similar observation, arguing that contemporary artists have become either slavish decorators or puritan intellectuals. Badal's works seek to thread the needle. They are not vacant of sensuality, nor do they rely solely on its invocation for their aesthetic power. Rather, through Badal's works, our peculiar contemporary anxiety about the status of beauty and allure in fine art itself becomes an object of reflection. Perception is suspended between sensation and recognition, attraction and resistance. In them, we are confronted with both the limitations and the power of visual experience. - Grant Edward Tyler

Ida Badal (b. 1989, White Plains, NY) lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her BFA from The Cooper Union, New York, in 2013. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include Slide, Zodiac Pictures, Los Angeles (2025); Gray Area, Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2023); Windward, my pet ram, Santa Barbara, CA (2023); and 3 and 4, 12.26 West, Los Angeles (2022). Her work has been presented in group exhibitions at LOYAL, Los Angeles; The Valley, Taos, NM; Left Field, Los Osos, CA; Karma, New York; The Hole, Los Angeles; VETA, Madrid, Spain; and Europa, New York.