

DEREK ELLER GALLERY



Areum Yang

Trees in Me

February 10 - March 12, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 10, 6-8pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of paintings by Areum Yang. Deftly rendered with a mixture of raw and painterly gestures, Yang's vivid, introspective portraits exist within anthropomorphic landscapes or surreal interiors.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang came to the United States in 2019 to get her Masters degree in painting and was quickly subsumed by the global pandemic. Many miles away from home and family, she found herself making artwork in an environment instilled with fear - not only of disease but also of racial adversity. She visualized her emotional state through paintings, combining dry and wet materials to create expressionistic compositions. Figures, coarsely rendered in pencil or charcoal, contrast with backdrops painted with colorful, improvisational mark-making. Yet, at moments, the boundaries are blurred, and subject and atmosphere become one.

"I am trying to structure experience without pinpointing," writes Yang. As such, there is an ambiguity in her compositions, which allows them to function as both representations of her inner life and more universal storytelling. In the work *To Remember My Forest*, a lone figure, his dog beside him, clutches a wilting house plant. He stands against a thicket of trees, each personified with a human head. Yang has indicated that trees are personally analogous to worries or concerns, suggesting a kind of self-portrait; indeed, she writes of making this painting, "While moving my arms wide to make arbitrary brush strokes, and sharply scraping the canvas with charcoal or a hard 4H pencil, the residues of tension and anxiety that cannot be expressed in verbal language appear on the surface through colors, marks, and shapes." At the same time, the figures cast shadows as if spotlighted and stand against a vibrant, blue backdrop, evoking the look of storybook characters on a stage or in a strangely wall-papered room, enacting a familiar fable set in an eerie forest.

Areum Yang (b. 1994 Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in New York) graduated from Hongik University, Seoul, South Korea in 2017 and from the Hunter MFA program, New York, NY in 2021. She has been included in group shows; *We Were Already Gone* at Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY and *Family Portrait*, UUU Art Collective, New York, NY. Yang was selected as the winner of the Silver Award for AHL T&W Foundation Contemporary Visual Art Awards and the KCC Young Artist Awards in 2021. Her work has been selected for print publication in *Art Maze Magazine* edition 23. This will be her first exhibition with the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.