

Karma
New York

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Ulala Imai
The Scene



Ulala Imai
The Scene
July 28–September 17, 2022
188 & 172 East 2nd Street

In the course of our daily lives, we sometimes encounter striking scenes that grab our hearts. The western sun hitting an abandoned toy, the clear night sky seen through trees as they pass by, the garden swaying in the wind outside the window.

It is by no means a special place, but when a balance is brought together by a variety of coincidences, it becomes very dramatic. It is like a carefully composed scene from a movie. The moment passes, never to return. I want to depict such a scene.

The repetition of the four seasons show people nearly identical scenes and allows them to feel nostalgic for the days that have passed.

I often paint motifs that evoke feelings of nostalgia. They show us their unchanged appearance through the centuries.

I feel as though by giving them the role of an actor and having them appear in a scene, the viewer feels as if he or she is witnessing a memorable scene in the painting. - Ulala Imai

Karma is pleased to present *The Scene*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Ulala Imai. The show will be on display at 188 East 2nd Street and 172 East 2nd Street, from July 28th to September 17th, 2022. This is Imai's first solo show with the gallery.

In *The Scene*, small moments are depicted with a vibrant intensity: a doll is nestled in a bed of flowers; an overripe banana and a golden teddy bear appear to have an ebullient glow; a Star Wars figure stands guard on a windswept path; moonlight lingers on the branches of trees; a deer stands still before the woods. Her subtle painting style consists of quick, decisive gestures, rendering a delicate reality. Imai memorializes her subjects inside this reality, and makes use of monumental scale to further absorb the viewer into their world.

The influences of Diego Velázquez and Édouard Manet inform Imai's proclivity for grand gestures and preservation of light. At times, she works through specific references, such as *Ophelia (Lucy)*, 2022, in which Imai stands in the long tradition of paintings portraying the tragic death of the heroine in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* onto Lucy from the Peanuts. This discreet movement is contrasted by works such as *Lovers*, 2022, where Lucy and Charlie Brown, perched in a tree branch, embody the generalized form of a romantic partnership. Throughout, Imai mines her subjects for their emotionality in order to capture tender moments.

Gently, Imai guides the viewer into this fleeting transition—to the moment that the ordinary becomes extraordinary. In doing so she offers a much needed reminder—that occurrences of deep importance in life show up unannounced, often to be found in the most unassuming details.

188 East 2nd Street



188 East 2nd Street



188 East 2nd Street



188 East 2nd Street



188 East 2nd Street



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Melody, 2022
Oil on canvas
51 1/4 × 76 3/8 inches; 130.18 × 194.01 cm
UI-22-021



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Green Gables, 2022
Oil on canvas
76 1/4 × 102 1/8 inches; 193.68 × 259.41 cm
UI-22-019

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai

Nocturne, 2022

Oil on canvas; in two parts

152 3/4 × 102 inches; 387.98 × 259.08 cm (overall)

UI-22-016

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai

Break time, 2022

Oil on canvas

51 1/8 × 63 3/4 inches; 129.87 × 161.93 cm

UI-22-012

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Care, 2022
Oil on canvas
76 3/8 × 102 1/8 inches; 194.01 × 259.41 cm
UI-22-013



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai

Holy Night, 2022

Oil on canvas; in two parts

152 3/4 × 102 inches; 387.98 × 259.08 cm (overall)

UI-22-027

Ulala Imai



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Waiting, 2022

Oil on canvas

46 × 35 7/8 inches; 116.7 × 91 cm

UI-22-014

Ulala Imai



188 East 2nd Street



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Ulala Imai



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Rose and the Beast, 2022

Oil on canvas

89 3/9 × 63 3/4 inches; 227.03 × 161.93 cm

UI-22-009

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai

Old Man, 2022

Oil on canvas

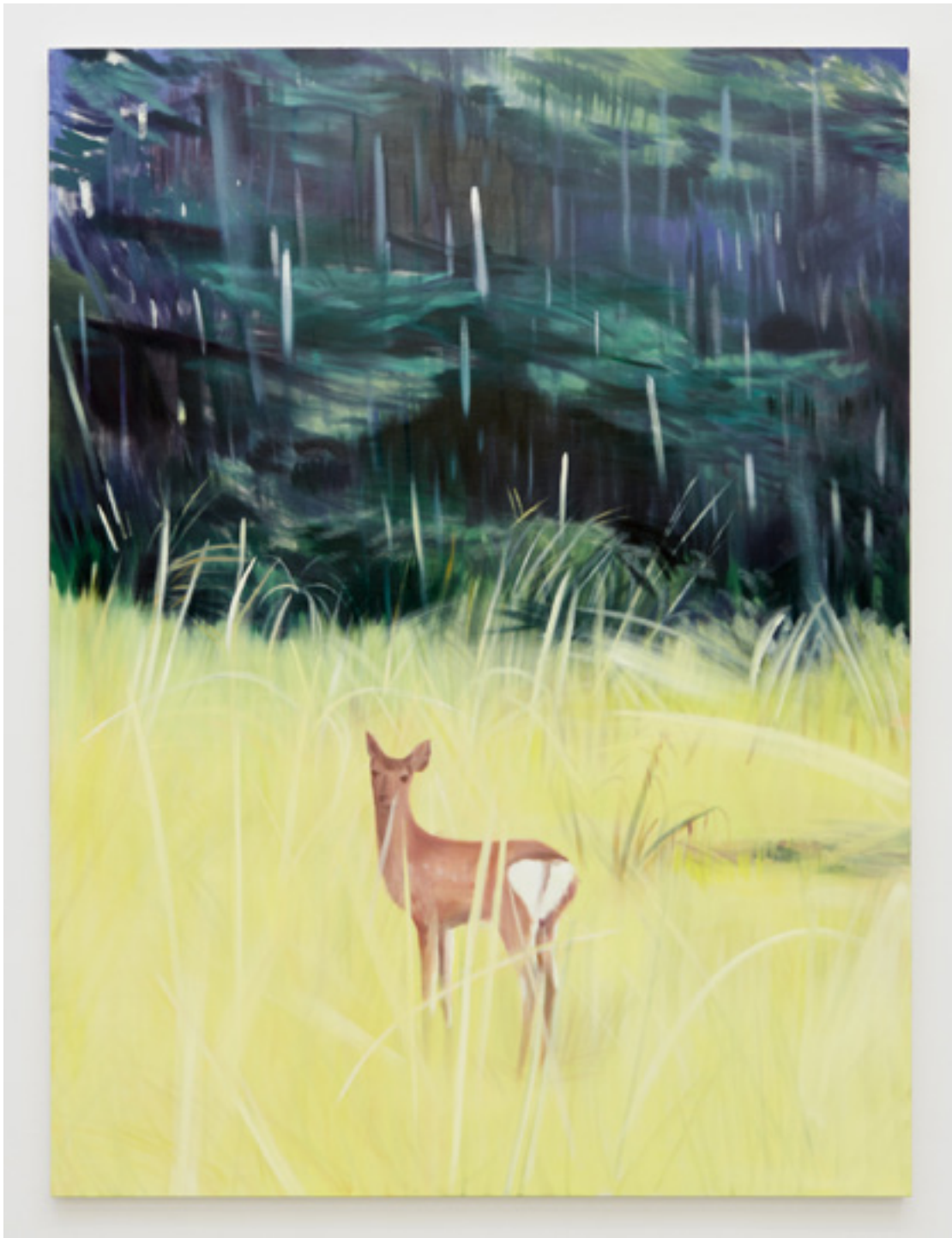
89 3/8 × 63 3/4 inches; 227.03 × 161.93 cm

UI-22-015

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Rains, 2022
Oil on canvas
102 × 76 3/8 inches; 259.08 × 194.01 cm
UI-22-020

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Holy Night, 2022
Oil on canvas
76 3/8 x 63 3/4 inches; 194 x 162 cm
UI-22-011

Ulala Imai



172 East 2nd Street



172 East 2nd Street



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Lovers, 2022
Oil on canvas
76 3/8 × 102 1/8 inches; 194.01 × 259.41 cm
UI-22-018

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Ophelia (Lucy), 2022
Oil on canvas
44 1/8 × 57 1/4 inches; 112.1 × 145.5 cm
UI-22-010

Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai



Ulala Imai
Lovers, 2022
Oil on canvas
76 3/8 × 51 1/4 inches; 194.01 × 130.18 cm
UI-22-017



Ulala Imai (b. 1982, Kanaga, Japan) paints scenes drawn from both her familial life and popular culture. She works in her home, transforming her children's toys, quotidian foods, and other household items into mysterious and lifelike subjects. A masterful oil painter, she relies on just a few brushstrokes to realize her luminous images. Arranging disparate objects in whimsical combinations, Imai's subtle associations infuse her paintings with the latent tension of interpersonal dynamics. A still life painter, Imai turns the materials of her specific family life into repositories for the more universal human exchanges that surround them.

Imai is a graduate of Tama Art University, Tokyo. Her recent solo exhibitions include Lulu, Mexico City (2021); Parco Museum, Tokyo (2021); Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles (2021); Uncle Brother, New York (2021); Union Pacific, London (2020); Oil Gallery, Tokyo (2020); Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Tokyo (2020); and XYZ Collective, Tokyo (2019).