

Minami Kobayashi

Incarnation

May 30 - July 12, 2025

Opening reception Friday, May 30th 6-9pm

In the Noh drama, *The Butterfly*, a monk visits an imperial villa in Kyoto. While he is admiring a blossoming plum tree, a woman appears. She confesses that she's actually a butterfly spirit in human form. She takes a moment or two to appreciate the charms of the venerated villa. Though as a butterfly she has managed to bond with the other flowers, she laments that she cannot enjoy the plum blossoms. The monk recites a prayer for her so that she may be released from her resentment and transform into a Buddha. Later he is again visited by the butterfly spirit, in a dream. She performs a dance of delight among the flowers and then disappears into the mist.

Noh theater moves at a slow pace; this play with only two scenes unfolds over an hour and ten minutes. Through their fluid yet intensely focused gestures, the masked performers activate tranquil, evocative settings, inviting audiences to revel in the subtle aesthetics and find their own meanings. In this different timescale, space opens up. Here, there is room to notice the arrival of springtime blossoms, and sense the presence of otherworldly manifestations.

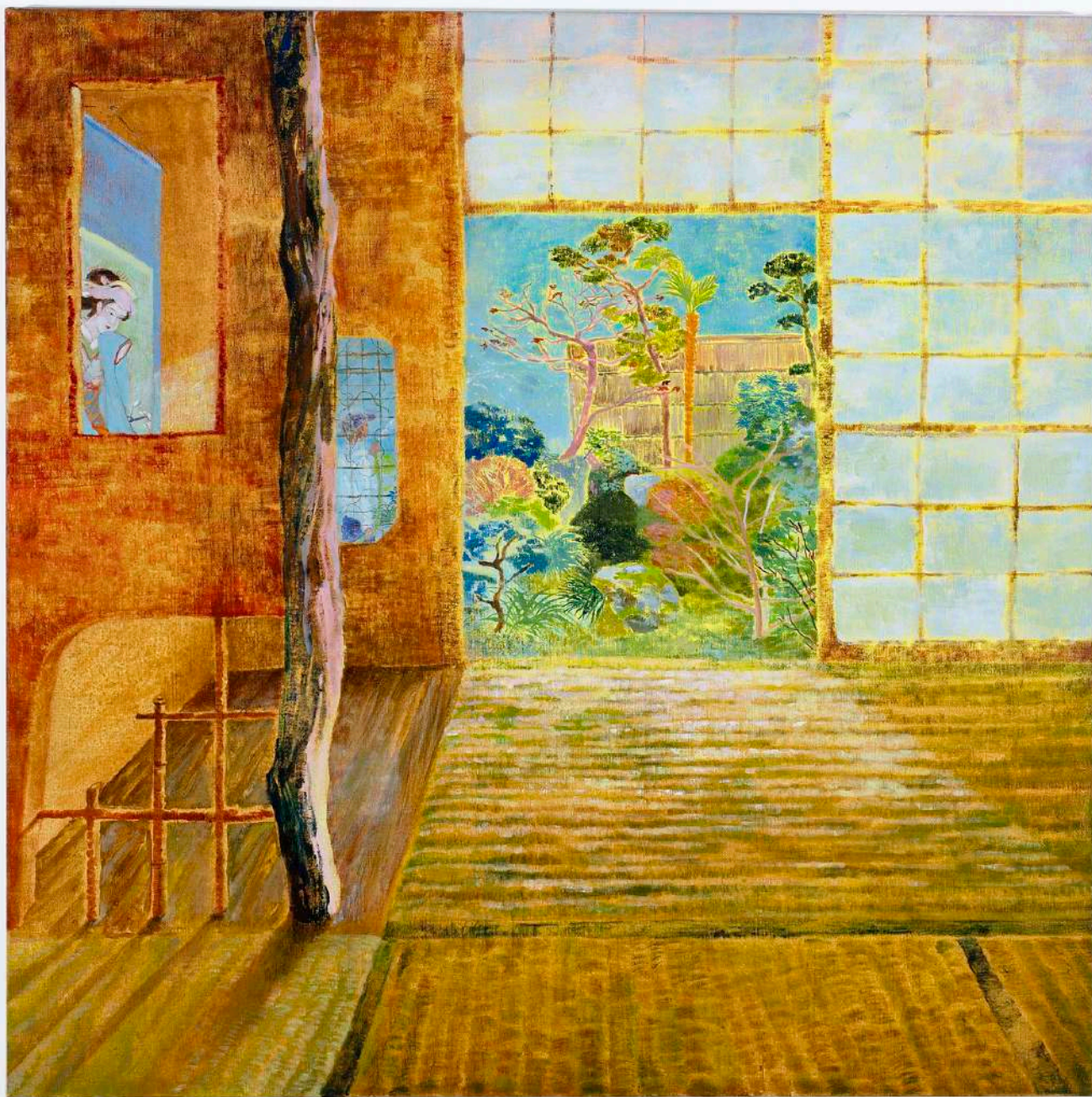
Minami Kobayashi's first solo exhibition with Bel Ami, *Incarnation*, conjures peaceful places where time is structured but unhurried, where reading and daydreaming are essential tasks in the ambient theatrics of becoming. In this series of paintings, Kobayashi pulls in a wide range of references and her own memories to confabulate scenarios—from sweeping landscapes to prismatic interiors—that are both illuminating and mystical.

Layering vibrant hues in oil, Kobayashi revisits a canvas again and again, rendering the textures of far-off recollections and recent observations until they feel tangible. Painting a tea room, a moonlit garden, a bookstore, or a neighbor's persimmon tree, the artist creates environs that are familiar yet fresh, like a breeze that signals a change in the seasons. A living room scene, *The butterfly dream*, captures the view from the artist's former apartment in Eagle Rock, Pasadena. The slight chill of an L.A. evening is palpable as a reclining figure in yellow cotton socks peers out of the window, experiencing the calm and cosmic vibrations of the desert city at night.

Many of the objects that populate Kobayashi's paintings reference her childhood hometown of Nagoya, Japan. For example, one work depicts the bookstore where she spent time hanging out with friends or listening to music, a place that was formative to Kobayashi because there she, "could live in someone else's life in the stories and plots." The shop, suffused with a summery brilliance, shows a young woman reading a favorite comic book, *Cardcaptor Sakura*. Above her head, paper butterflies manufactured in the town hover aloft; the surreal toy fascinates and vexes her because she isn't sure how she is supposed to play with it.

Youth is a realm of discovery and non-stop change, a time when our senses are continuously reawakened and refreshed. Kobayashi is drawn to the transitional spaces and moments in our adult lives that restore the viewer to that same sense of wonder, with its unexpected flutterings. The details and furnishings of Kobayashi's paintings harmoniously mix the old and the new, the ancient and the contemporary, the fabulous and the concrete, hinting that there is always more mystery and enchantment.

Minami Kobayashi (b. 1989, Nagoya, Japan) lives and works in London. She studied at the Tokyo University of the Arts and School of the Art Institute, Chicago. Selected solo and two person presentations include Frestonian Gallery, London (2024); Et Al. Gallery, San Francisco (2023); Frestonian Gallery, London (2023); Goldfinch Gallery, Chicago (2022); Goldfinch Gallery, Chicago (2019); Kate's Little Angel, Los Angeles (2019); Baby Blue Gallery, Chicago (2017); and TANNE Gallery, Tokyo (2015). Recent group shows include *We Almost Forgot*, Long Story Short, New York (2024); *Panta Rhei*, Alice Amati, London (2024); *Loose Threads*, Bombon Project Gallery, Barcelona (2024); *Friends and Lovers*, Shulamit Nazarian Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); *Trio show*, Dinner Party Gallery, London (2022); *Lovely*, OIL Gallery by Bijyutsu Techo, Tokyo (2022); *Beyond Each Other*, Florence Trust, London (2021); *Tender the Bone*, Goldfinch Gallery, Chicago (2021); *Glimpse*, Ivl3 Gallery, Chicago (2021); *CAVE CANEM*, Eve Leibe Gallery, London (2021); *New-laid eggs vol.3*, GALLERY MoMo Ryogoku, Tokyo (2020); *Birds shun such trees*, Et al. Gallery, San Francisco (2020); *A Peripheral Reverie*, Penske Project, Montecito (2020); *Anecdote*, Stems Gallery, Brussels (2020); and *Place out of Time*, Setouchi Triennial 2019, Kagawa (2024).

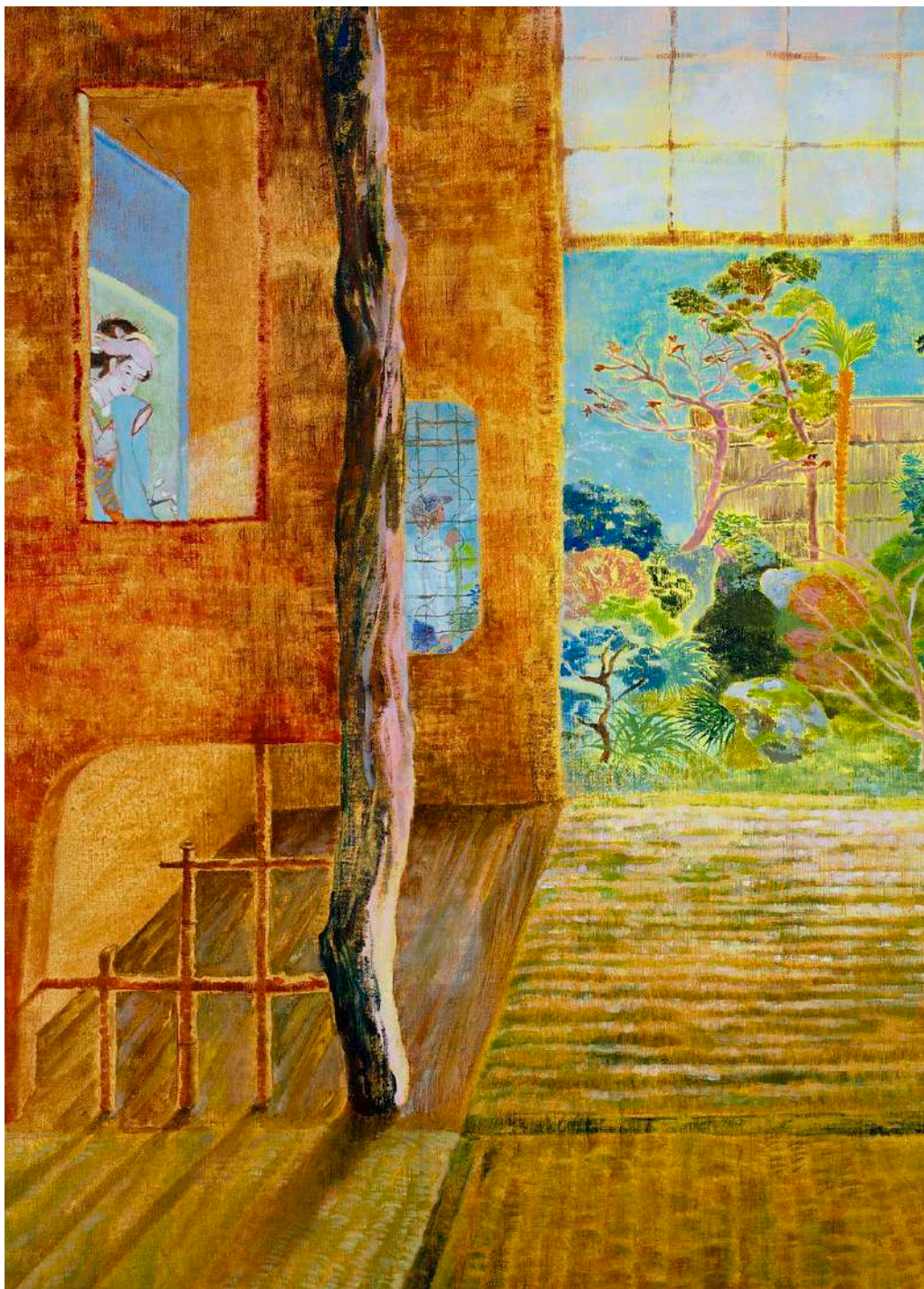


Minami Kobayashi

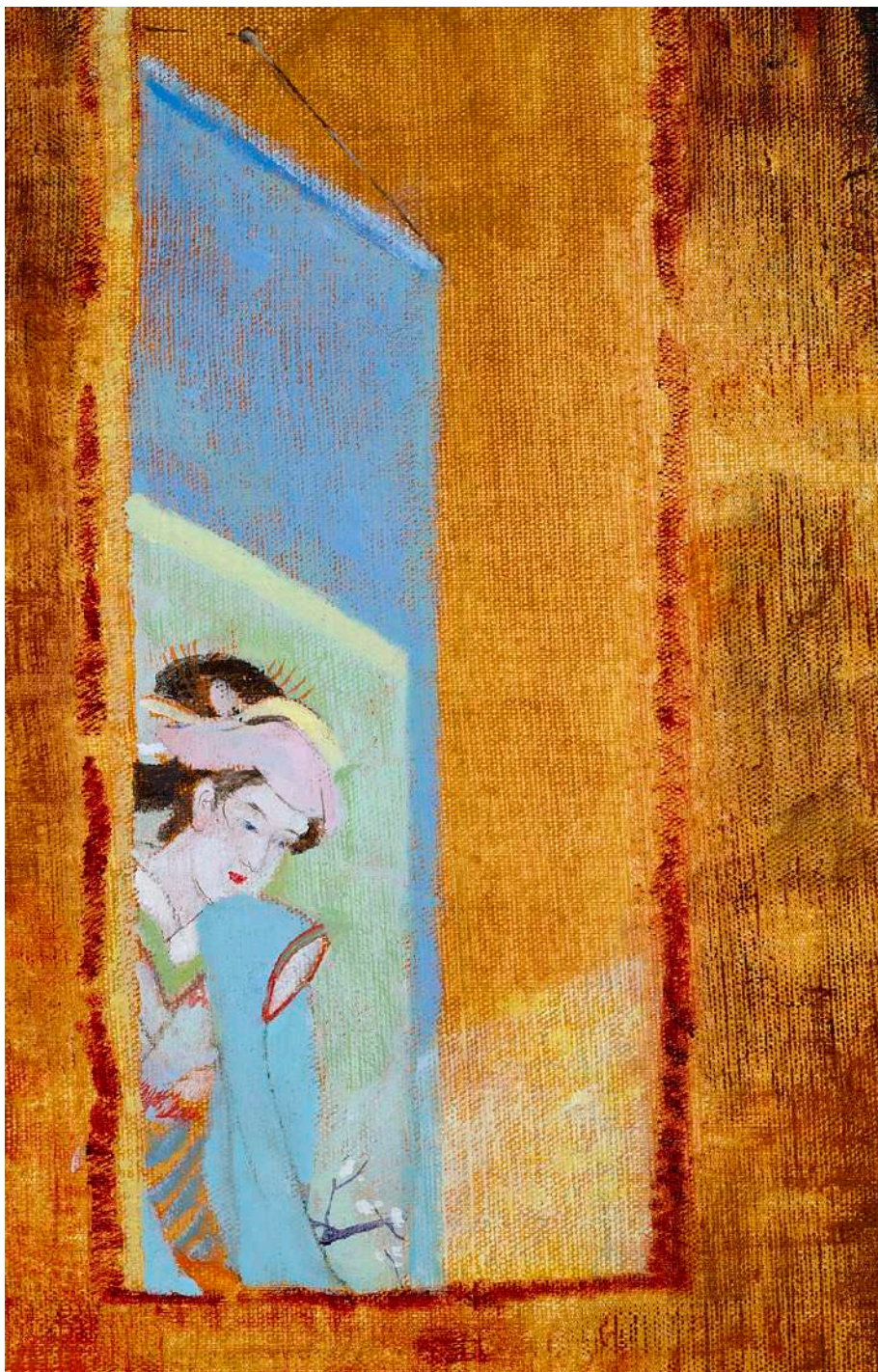
The tea room and the sound of watering, 2025

Oil on linen

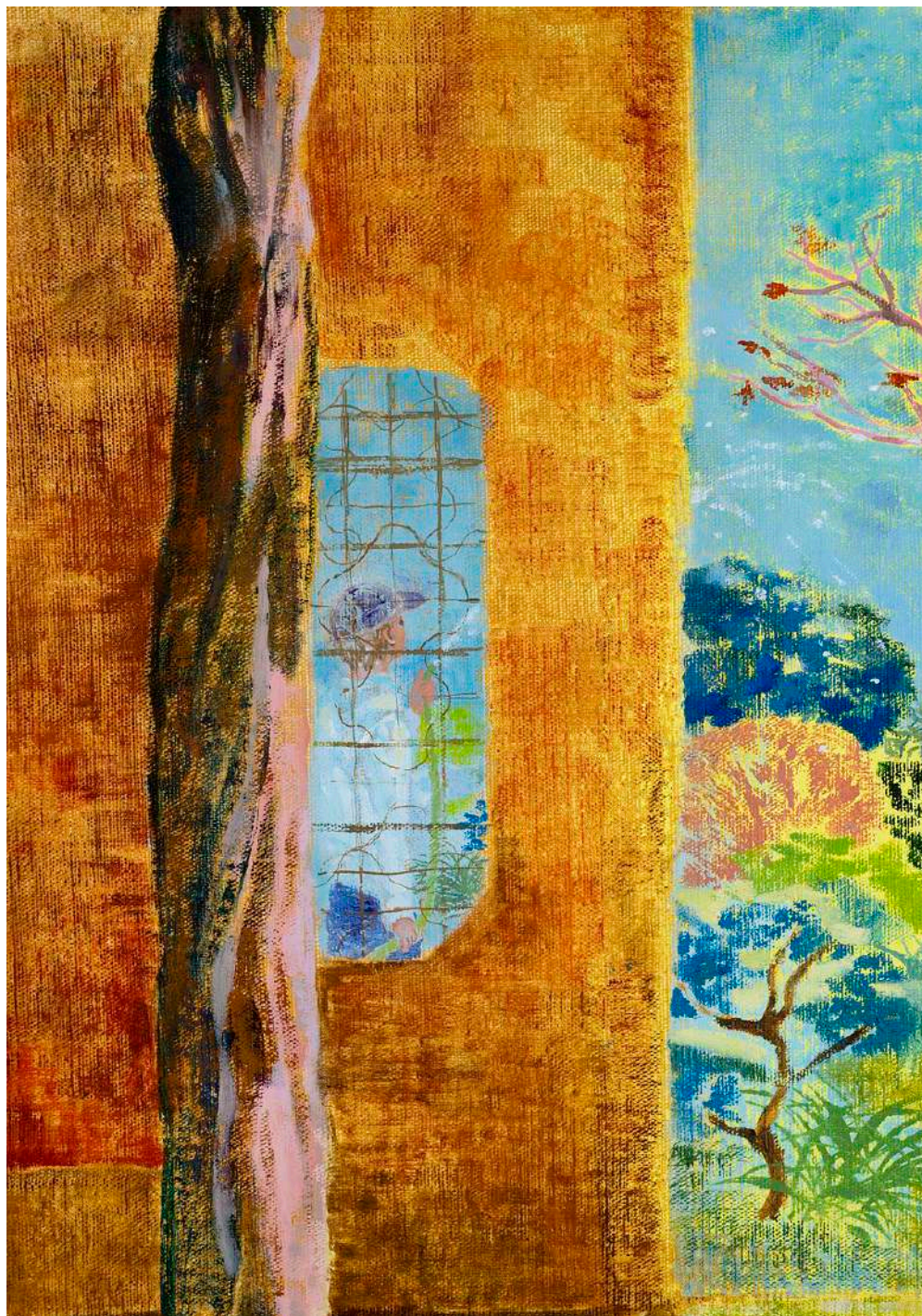
39 3/8 x 39 3/8 in (100 x 100 cm)



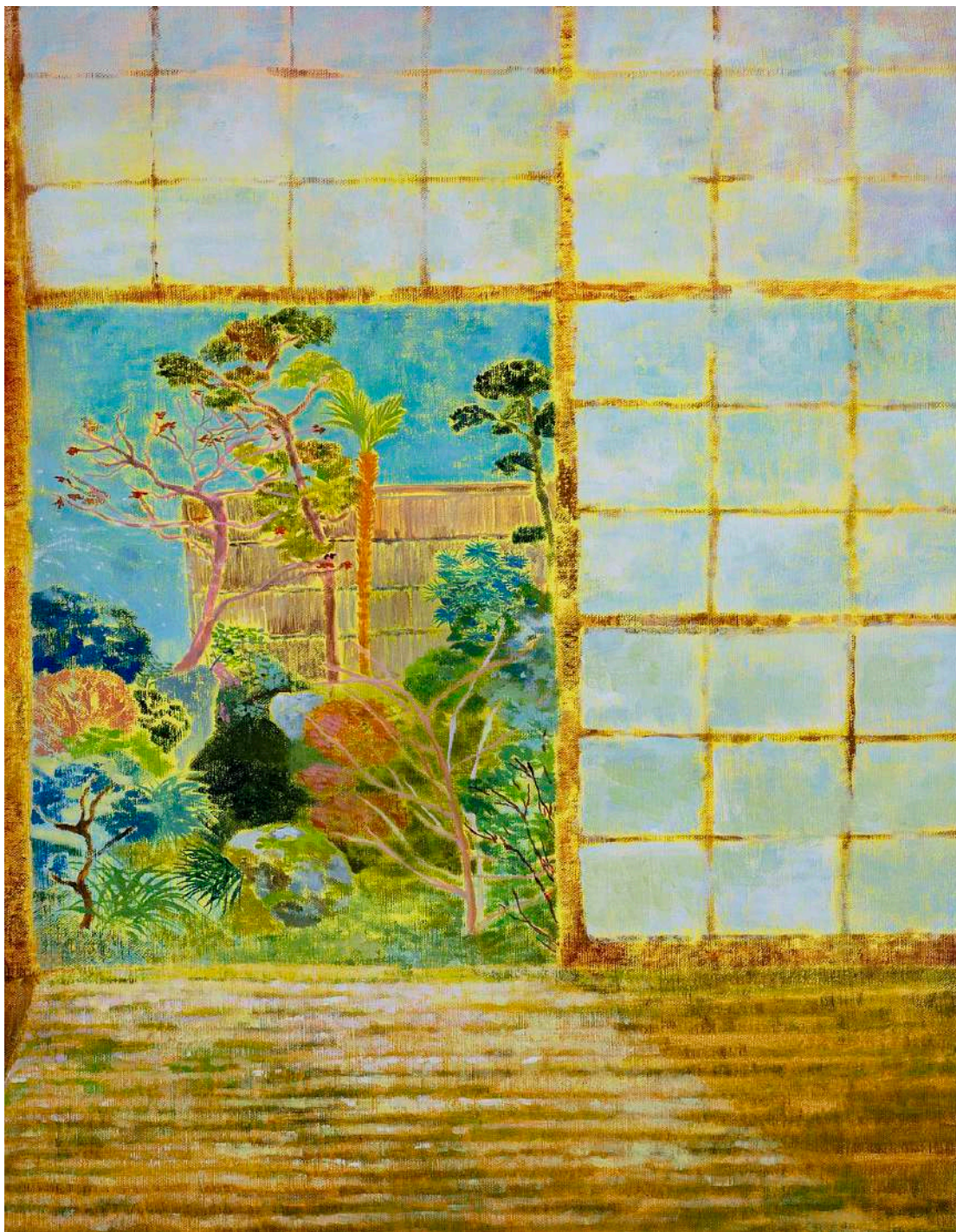
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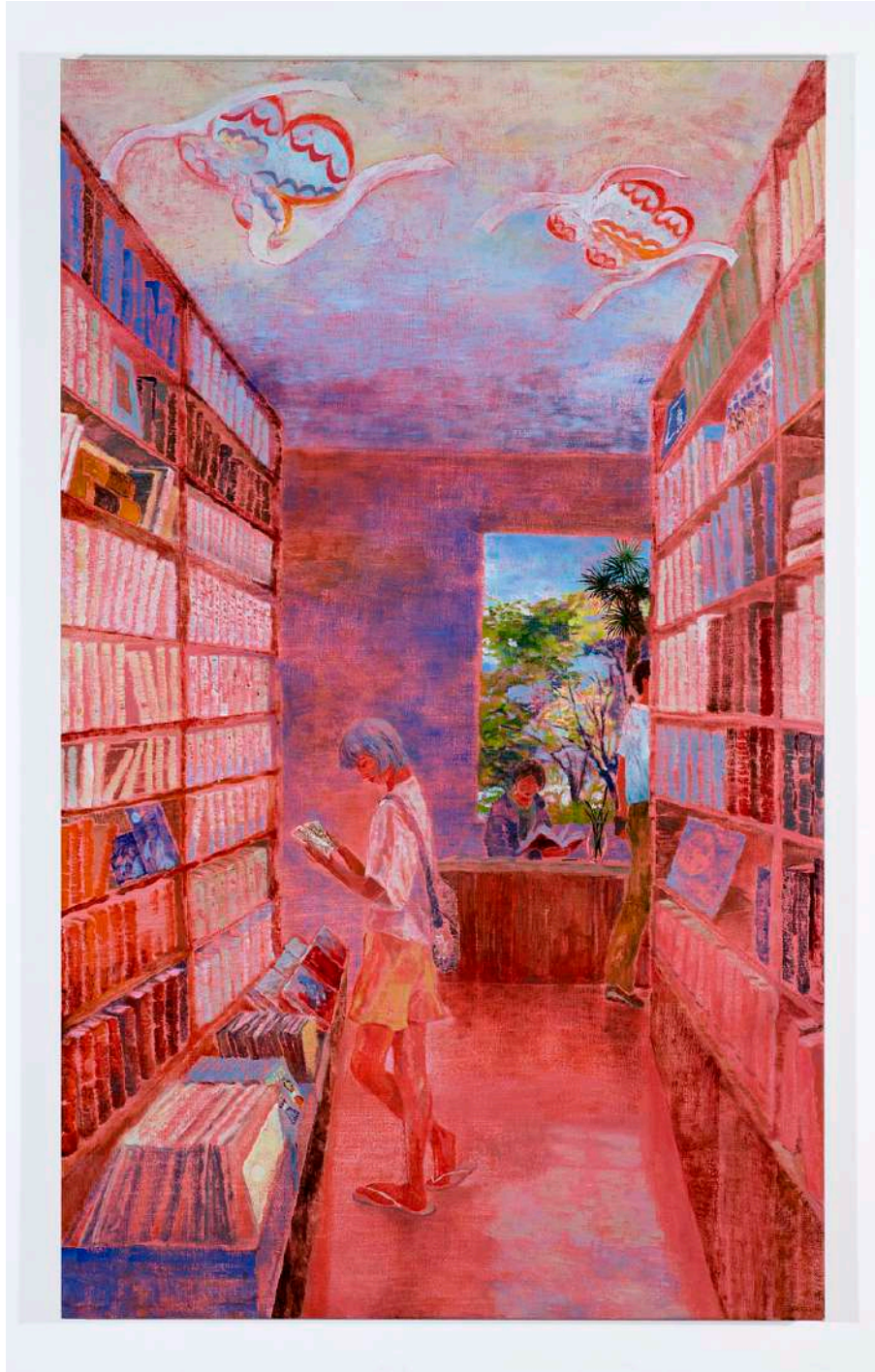
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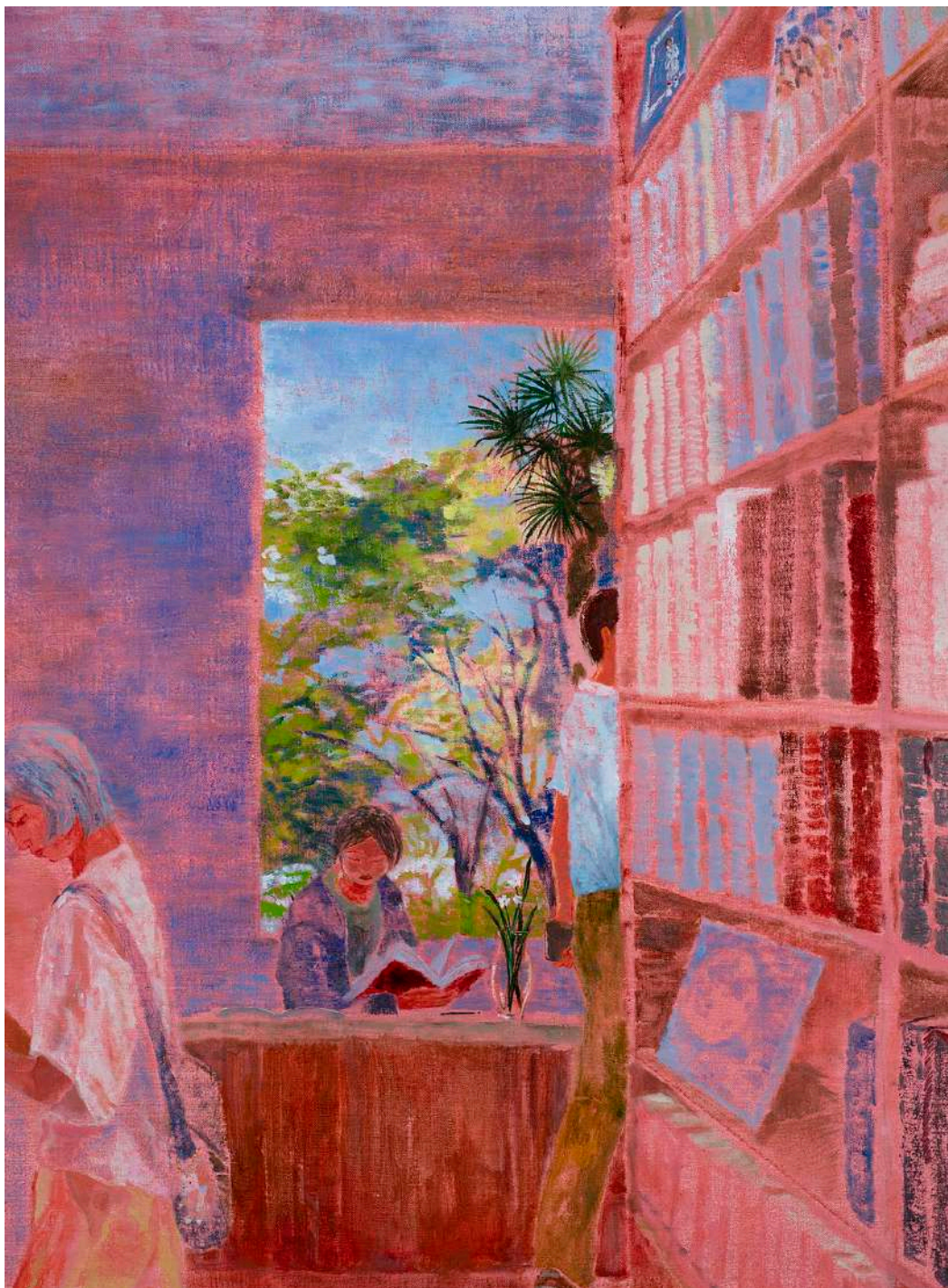
Minami Kobayashi
Summer break at the used bookstore, 2025
Oil on linen
59 x 35 3/8 in (150 x 90 cm)



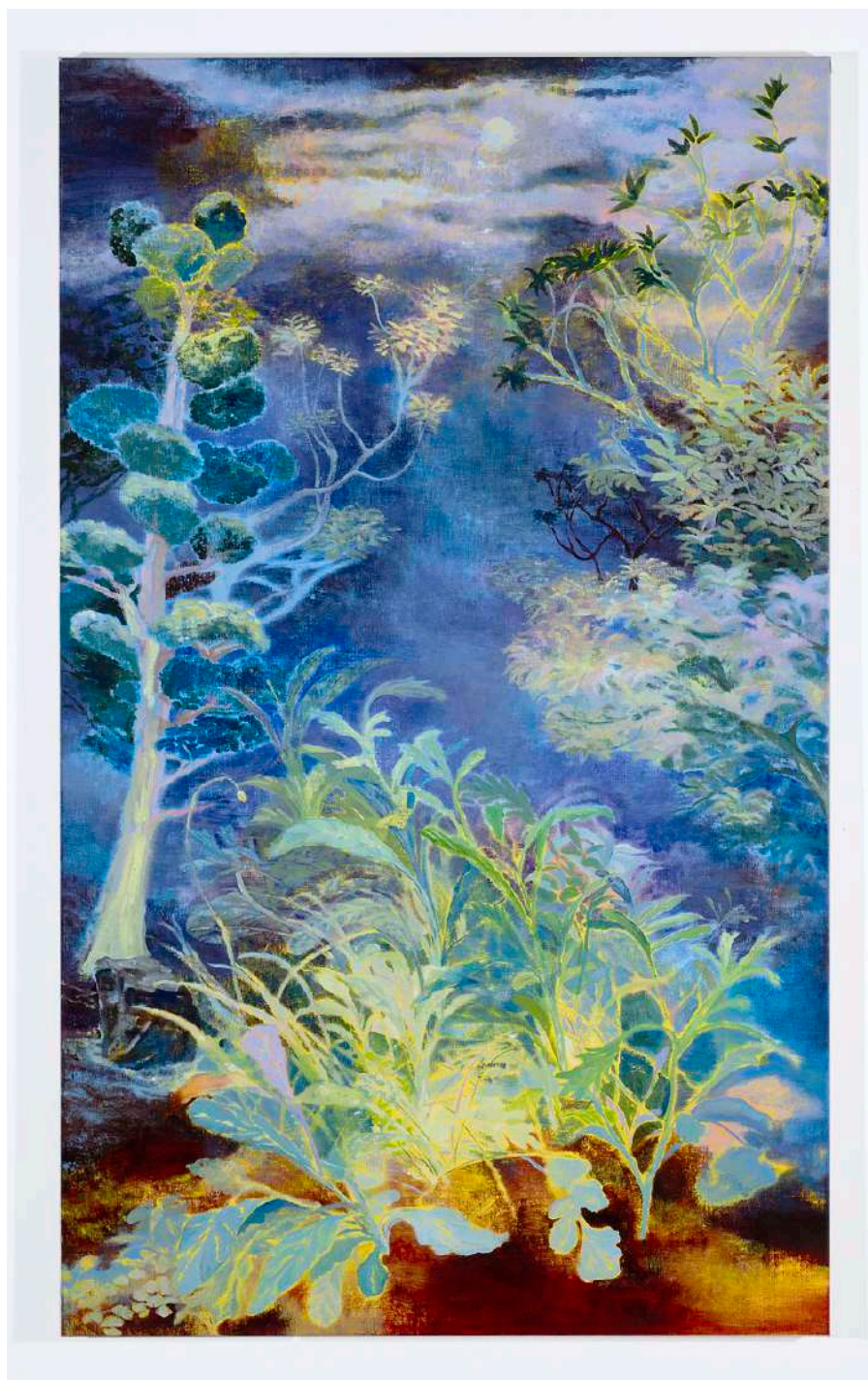
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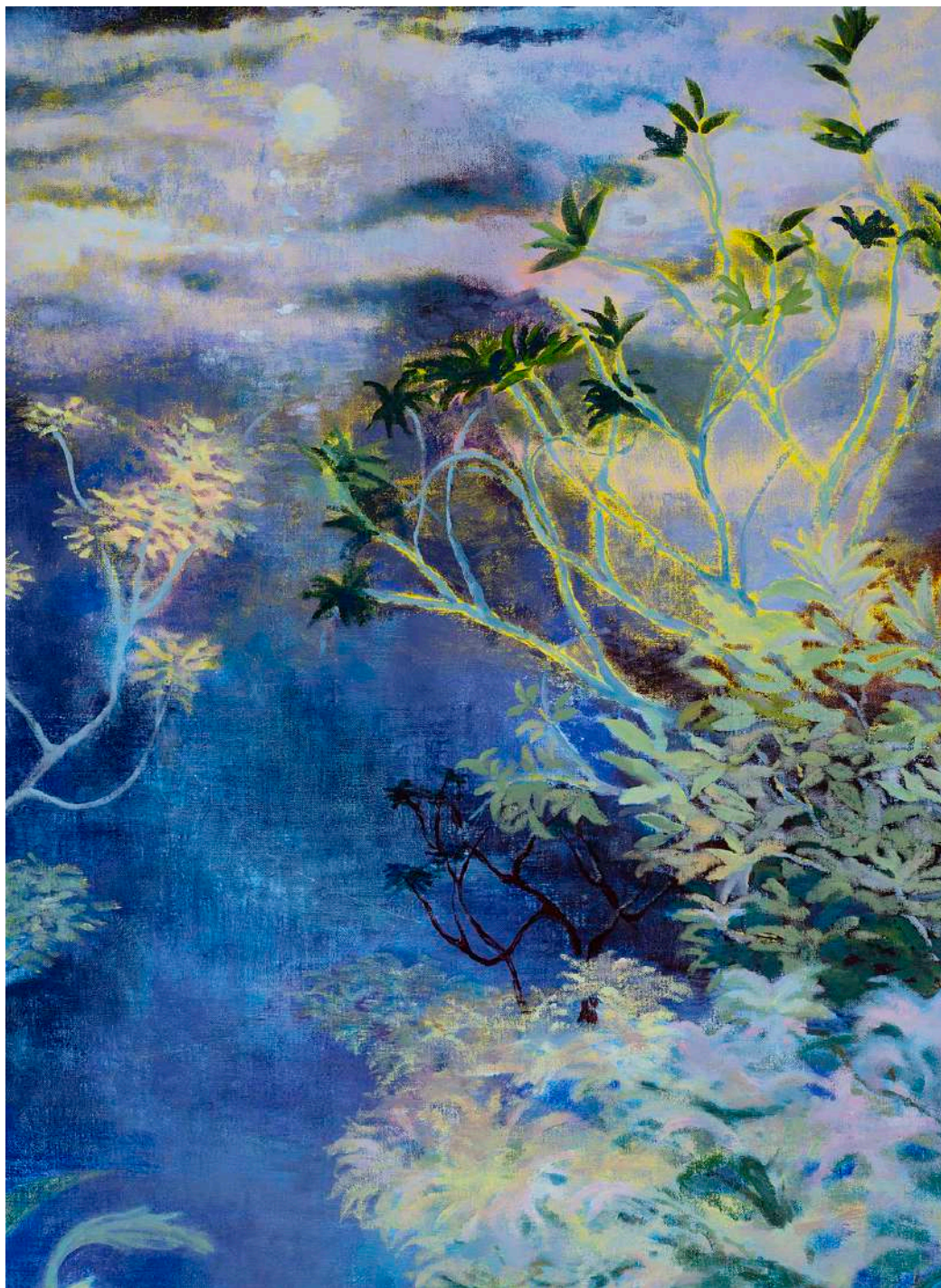
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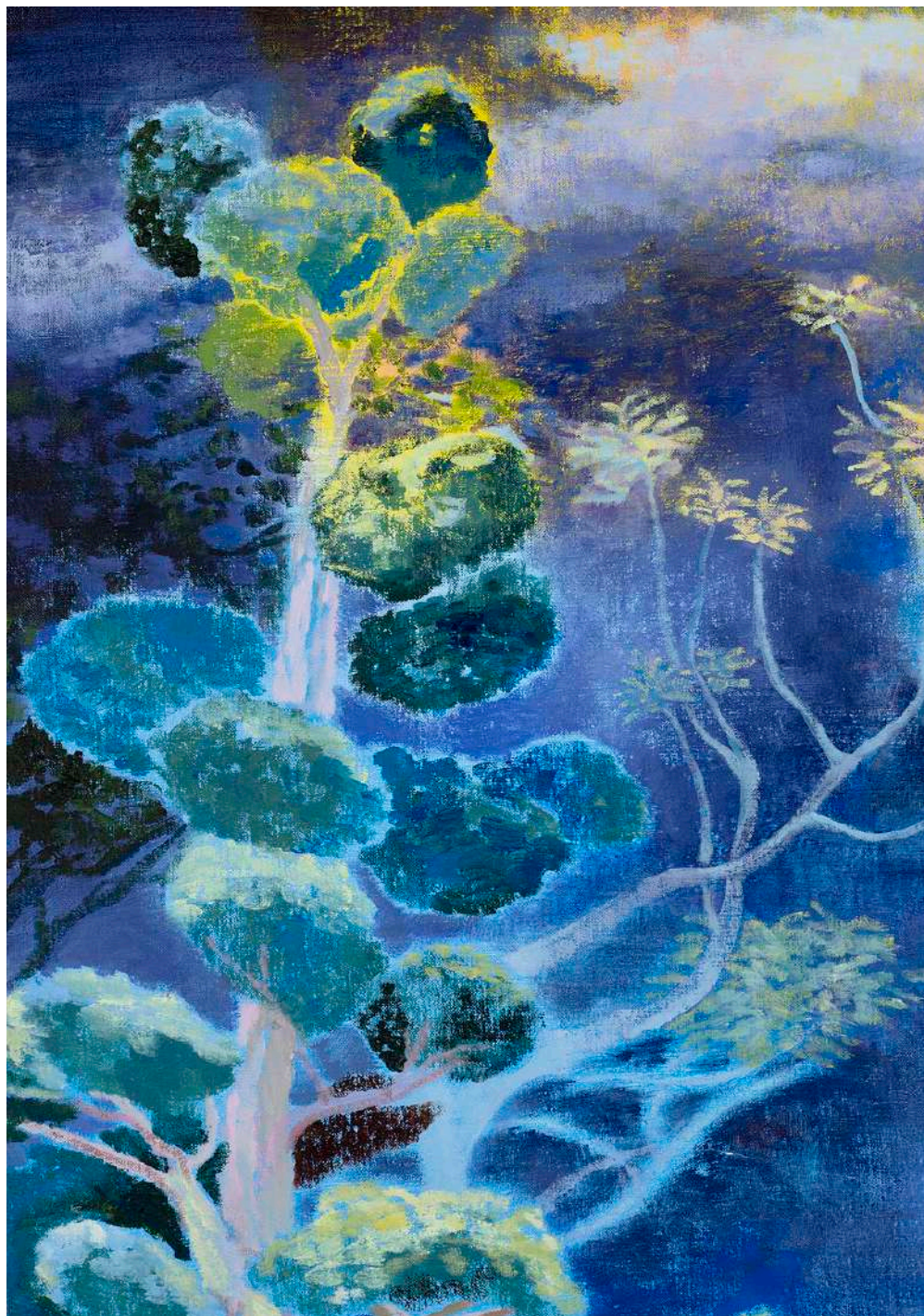
Minami Kobayashi
Vespertinal prayer in the garden, 2025
Oil on linen
59 x 35 3/8 in (150 x 90 cm)



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Vespertinal prayer in the garden, 2025



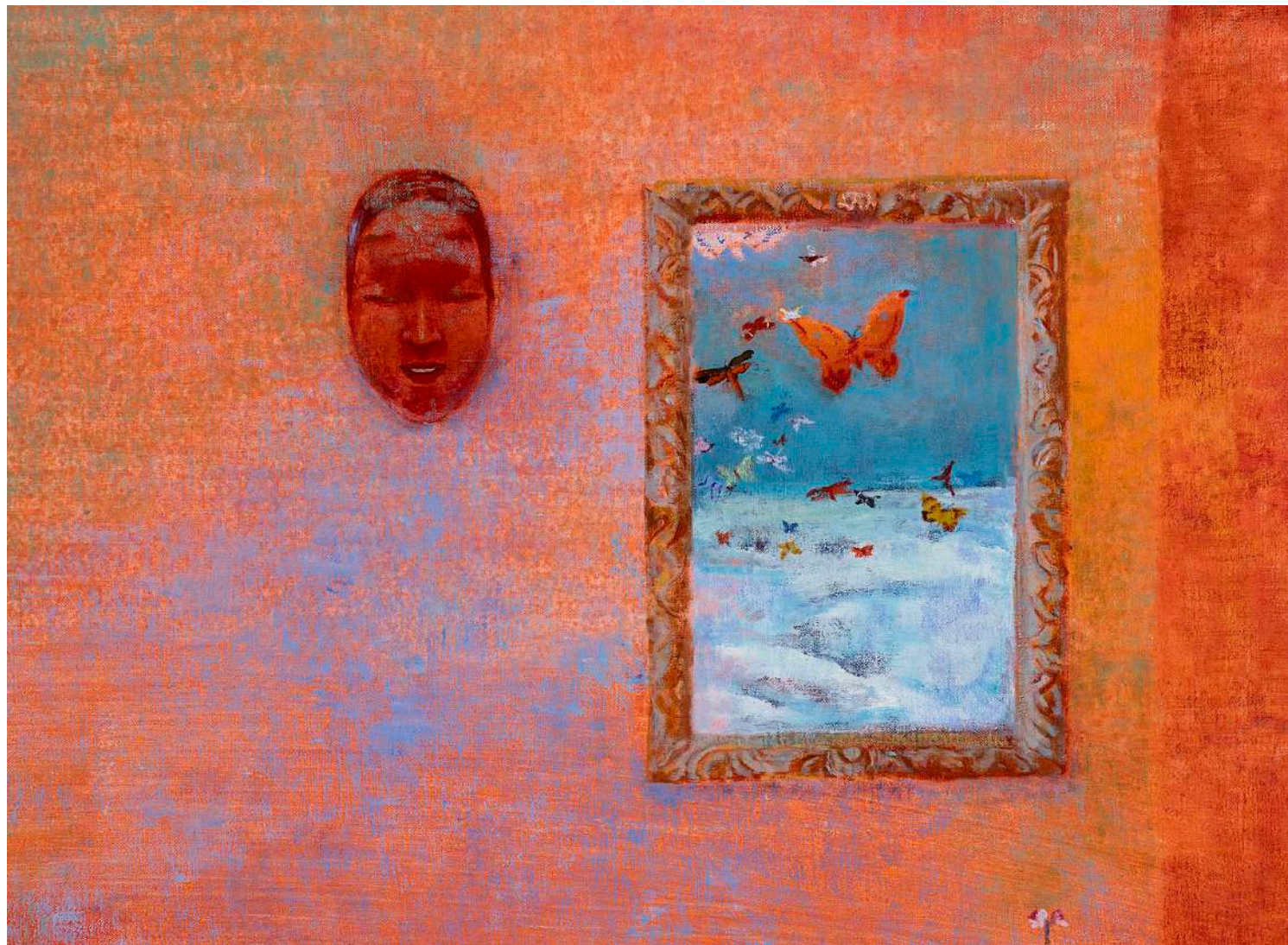
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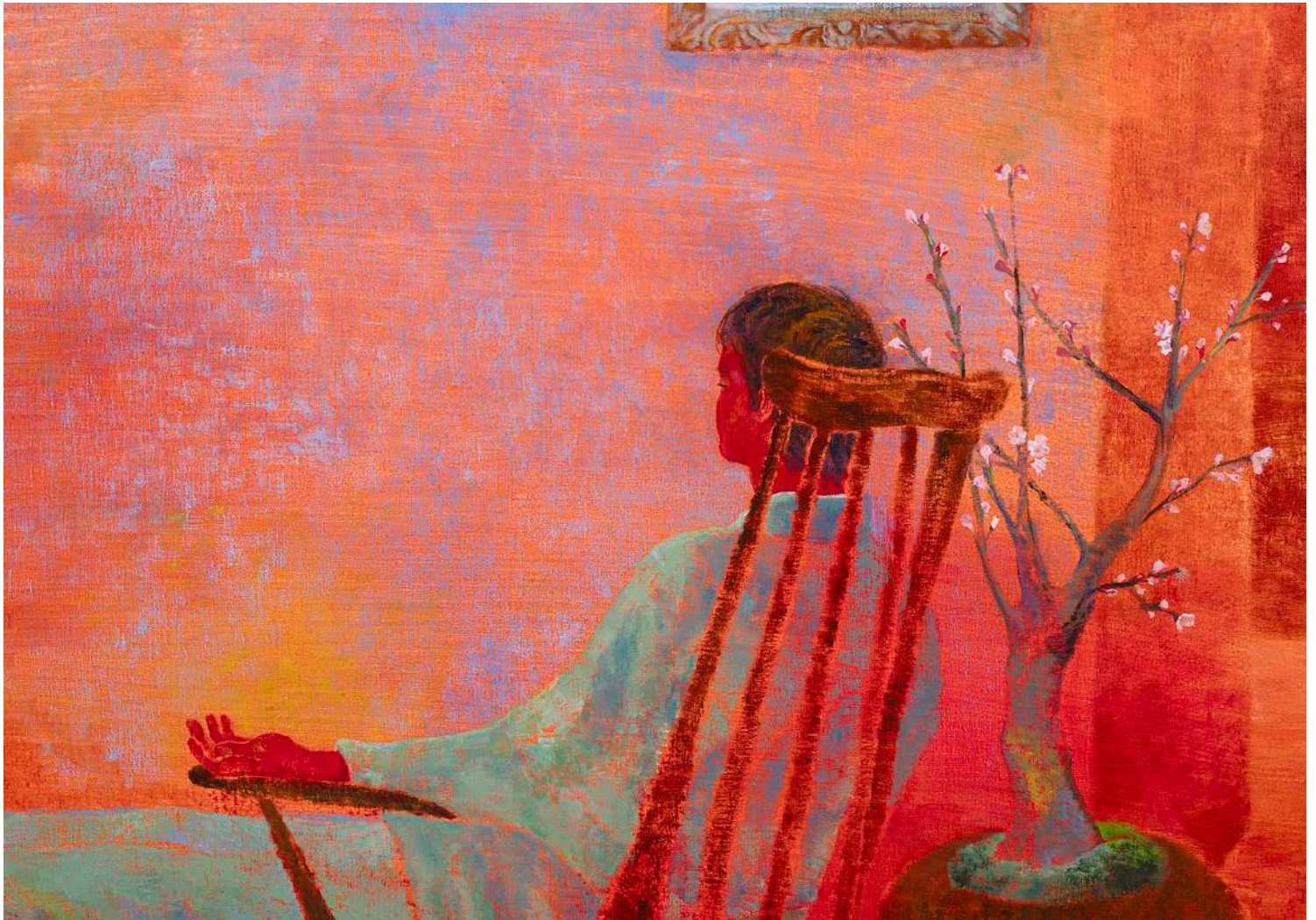
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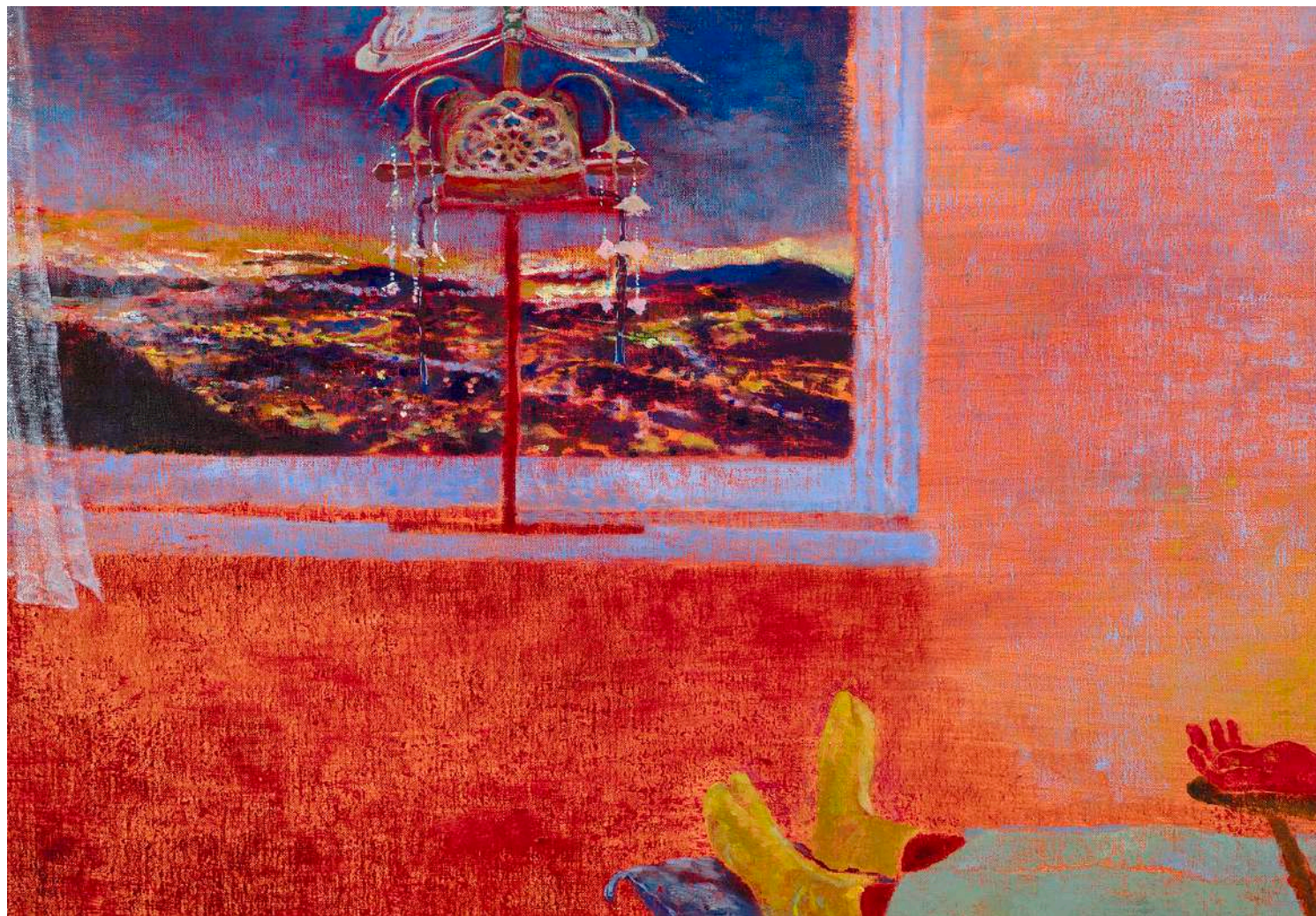
Minami Kobayashi
The butterfly dream, 2025
Oil on linen
51 1/8 x 39 3/8 in (130 x 100 cm)



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The butterfly dream, 2025



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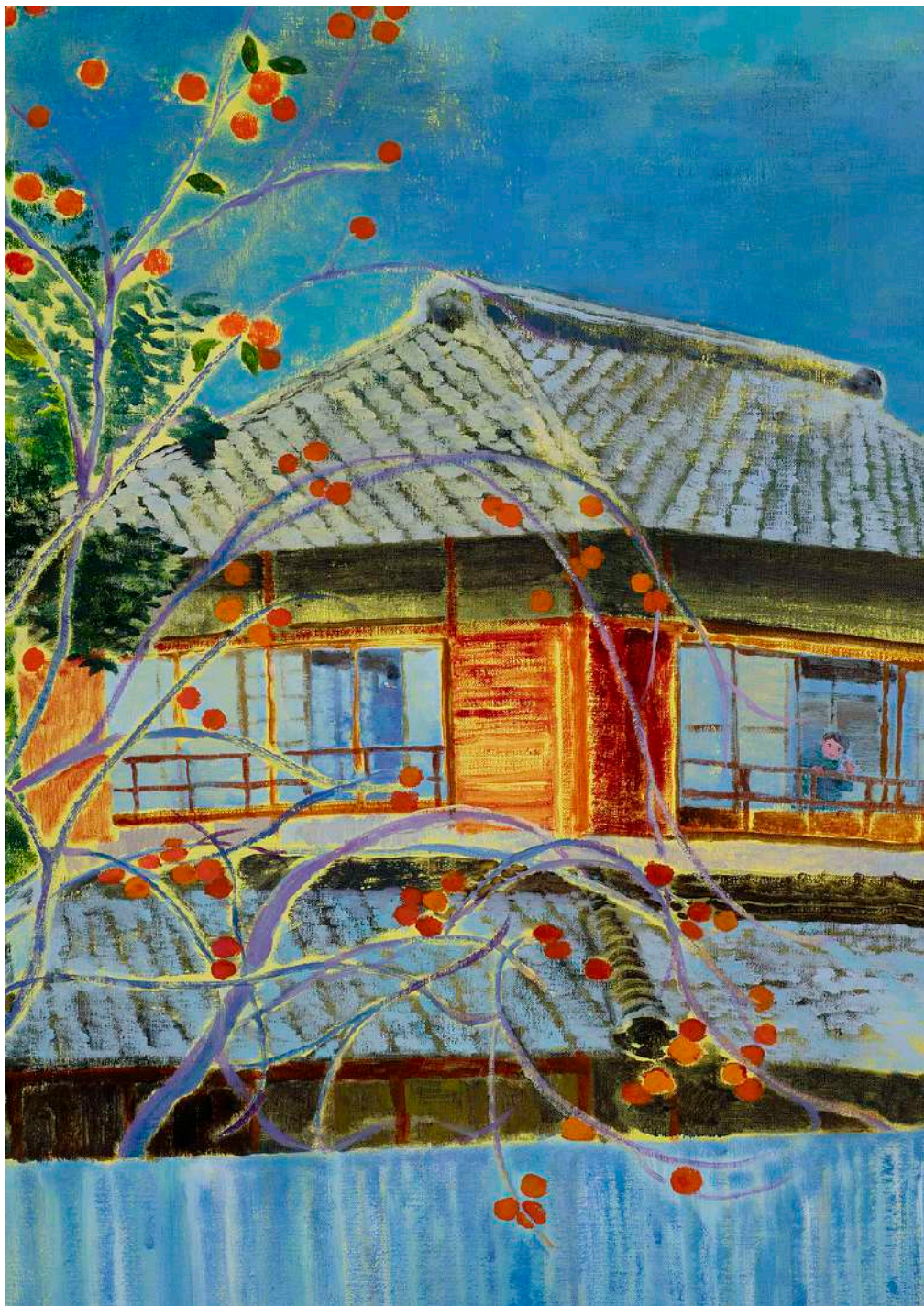
Farmer's family under a persimmon tree, 2025

Oil on linen

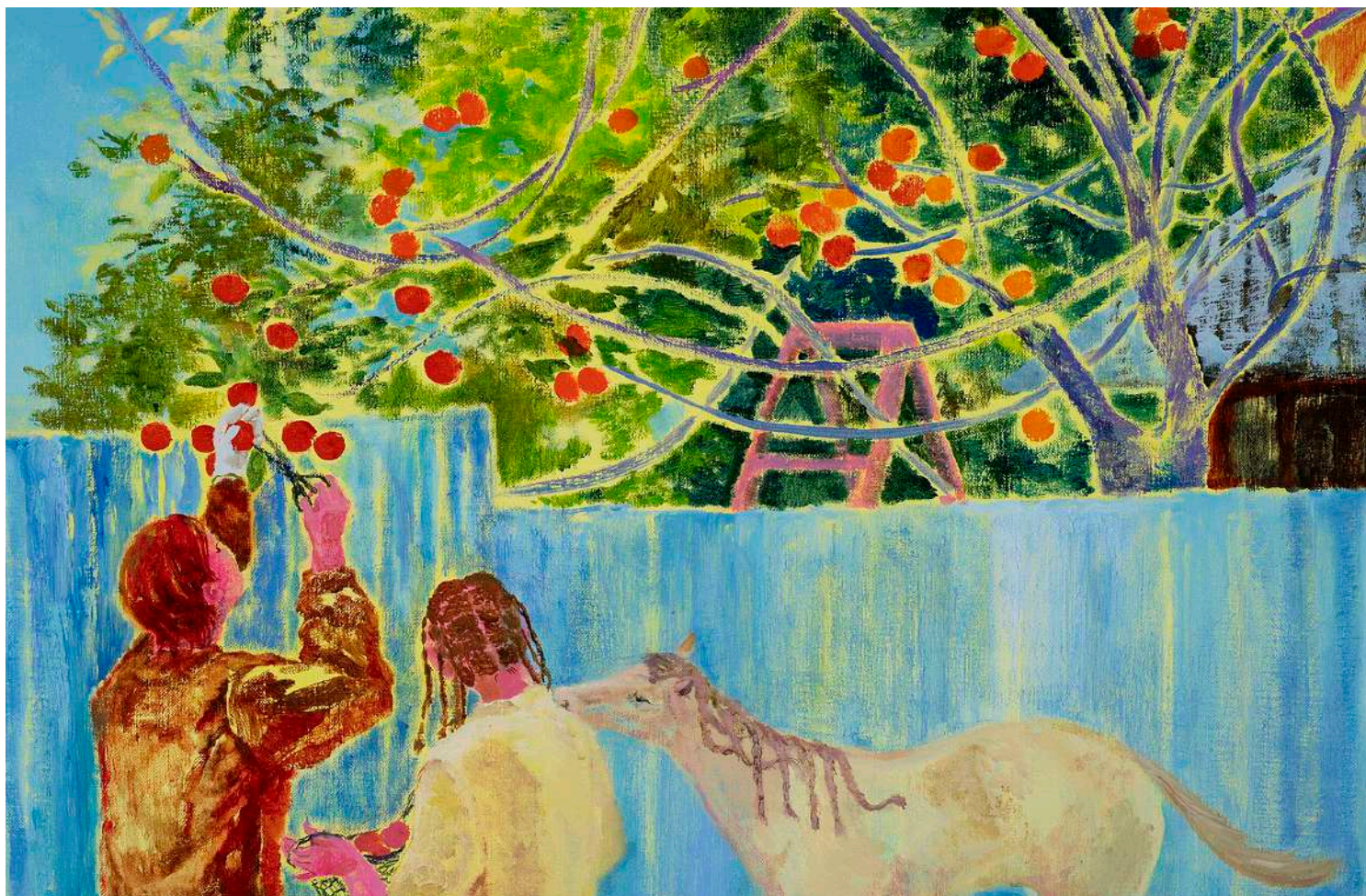
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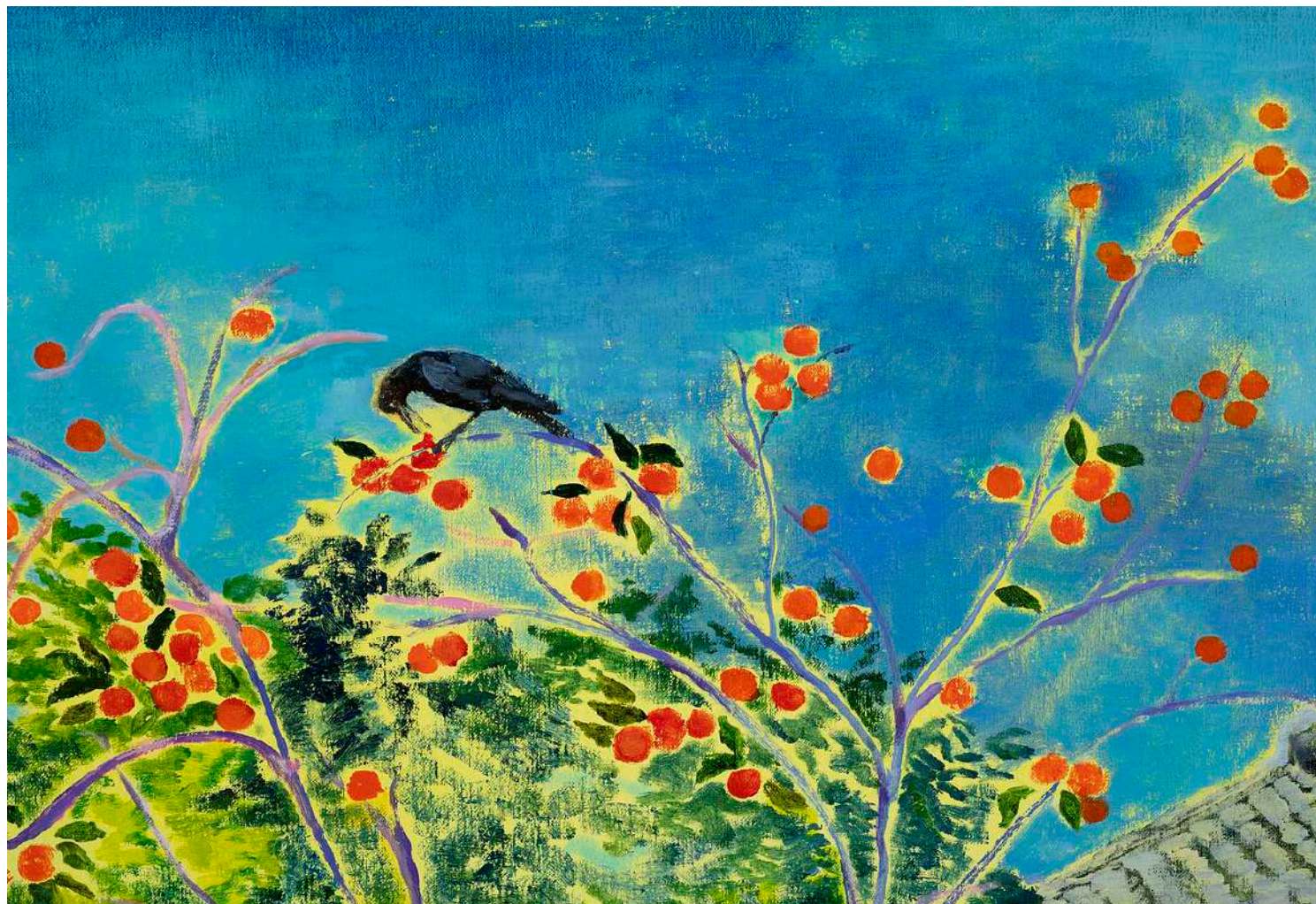
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Farmer's family under a persimmon tree, 2025



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