

Press Release

Nikita Gale

99 DREAMS

November 5th 2025 - January 4th, 2026

99 DREAMS is a newly commissioned installation based on a dream. In the dream, the artist Nikita Gale encountered a work that closely resembled the one presented in this exhibition — bringing what was once seen in a vision into reality.

The exhibition occupies the threshold that opens onto the space of the unconscious. Where "100" symbolizes wholeness and order, "99" points to a state of deviation from that order: an open space where boundaries waver, unfixed. This is a state that touches up against the realm of the unconscious, uncontained by the logic of consciousness. Nikita Gale, too, regards this 99-ness not as a condition of lack, but as an open fissure where subtle events unfold. *99 DREAMS* summons precisely these fragments and rhythms of the unconscious into the exhibition space, drawing the viewer toward that same threshold. Accompanying the exhibition is a publication containing 99 phrases pulled from Gale's dream journal amassed over several years. The narrative quality of the phrases evokes the tension between the logic of dreams and the impulse to make sense of them in waking life.

The viewer comes face to face with the exhibition space. Beyond the familiar white walls, that which one expected to see is nowhere to be found. The space feels still, as if entirely empty; the atmosphere is of something gone awry. But as one slowly shifts one's gaze, delicate traces begin to gradually emerge from somewhere within the gaps of the space itself. Placed in spots that initially elude the eye, the photograms gesture toward the presence of the exhibition through this subtle estrangement.

Like afterimages seeping into the wake of a vanished dream, Gale's photograms *DREAM 5* (2025) and *DREAM 7* (2025) capture the moment when an object, exposed to light, gives form to the latent fragments of the unconscious. Drawn in light, these traces hold onto the instant in which boundaries of medium blur and the image itself comes into being. The teapots in the photogram both index the fragments of the installation in the gallery below and serve as a metaphor for distorted memory, daily life, the body, labor, escape, healing,

and recovery. In *DREAM 5* and *DREAM 7*, atop a deep base of burgundy and reddish brown, the coppery tones of the latter soak into amber and orange in a warm gradation, the layers overlapping to create a dreamy depth and painterly impression.

The faint sound of a boiling kettle bleeds outward, as if flowing from some deep and distant source. Descending into the basement gallery, drawn by that faint sound, one is met by a cinematic performance of steam, unfurling and blurring the field of vision into a haze. Here, sight, sound, smell, and bodily sensation intermingle, transforming the space into a multilayered stage of sensory experience. Evoking a physical response of healing and release, the scent of mugwort permeates into the viewer's unconscious, ultimately guiding them inside the boundaries of *99 DREAMS*. In this way, the bodily symptoms that gradually emerge within the space are more than simple phenomenological reactions; they arise from Gale's method of appropriating "things that already exist (readymades)." Nikita Gale's artistic practice explores the dynamics between the physical infrastructures of performance, power, and attention. For the artist, the readymade is not merely a sculptural means, but a language in its own right, inscribed with both the traces of labor and its own social, political, and cultural contexts. And by repositioning them within new contexts without erasing those traces, Gale opens up new relations and meanings.

Gale resists overproduction, displacing the process of thinking through the act of "making less and arranging differently" as the artist experiments with the very conditions of audience engagement and dialogue. This is both an ethical gesture of energy conservation and a response to what Gale calls the "labor of relocating contexts." Notably, in *99 DREAMS*, by materializing a vision first seen in a dream through the use of readymade objects, the work collapses the distinction between imagination and production. The installation consists of components carefully selected and assembled by the artist for this exhibition, including 96 teapots filled with mugwort, three additional tea kettles, and an audiovisual system, created with Gale's long time collaborator and lighting designer Josephine Wang, that synchronizes the boiling of the kettles and the lighting. Through these elements, the dreamed image much like a readymade object finds its form in the very materials of everyday life ; here, the functions and contexts of familiar objects are transposed into an unfamiliar language, marking the opening scenes of an entirely new dream. Inside these 99 dreams, the absence of performers and sound foregrounds the invisible foundations of labor and institutional structures even as viewers perceive the rhythm of the work itself through their own bodies. Silence, invisibility, and abstraction act as mediating devices that crack open the structures of gaze, power, visibility, and naming.¹

In this piece, the stage is occupied not by a performer but by these 99 vessels. While the 96 teapots, each imbued with its own memories, dreams, and stories, are positioned as if at rest, from each spout springs a small bundle of mugwort like fresh shoots, quietly asserting a subtle presence. Meanwhile, kettles, alternately emitting sound and steam like a pair of ghosts, stand in for the absent body—an absence

1 This summary of Nikita Gale's position on the readymade references a lecture by the artist at Stanford University in 2025.

felt all the more intensely, of course, through the body of the present viewer. It is when the light catches the steam that the exhibition truly unfolds: an entanglement of sound, shadow, light, and the viewer's own participation, all tension and effects. Describing sound as "an intimate medium that engages our sense of touch in minute and incremental ways,"² Gale has also noted the way that it infiltrates, reflects, and never asks for permission. In *99 DREAMS* sound and steam traverse, infiltrate, and reflect across space—at times opening onto unease, at others onto the possibility of rest and escape—uncovering strata where perception and affect intertwine and accumulate, layer after layer. Instead of objects subject to evaluation or judgment, the 99 profoundly individual dream spaces presented by Gale thus converge into a site where fugitivity, struggle, desire, vision, and the unconscious converge.

In *99 DREAMS*, the light holds on—for just a moment—to the dissipating steam. This light, illuminating these faint, intangible traces, these rhythms of evaporation, serves as a quiet yet unmistakable declaration of refusal toward the politics of disappearance while simultaneously emphasizing all the more, somewhat paradoxically, the weight of its very existence. The act of leaving a shadow operates as proof of material existence.

By emptying out the traditional framework of performance, Nikita Gale's *99 DREAMS* presents an entirely different kind of stage, one composed of kettles, steam, light, shadow and silence. The viewer is no longer a simple spectator but a being who, amidst this unpredictable rhythm, comes into awareness of their own bodily responses and inner perceptions. *99 DREAMS* leaves this question open. An imagination made possible precisely because it is incomplete; a rhythm that can only arise within the incompleteness of a dream. It is from that very state of openness that these 99 dreams come to us, crossing that boundary.

2 Collymore, Nan. *In Conversation with Nikita Gale: Experiencing Anonymity Through Abstraction*. 2018. <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/anonymity-is-a-refusal-of-identity/>

Overview of the Exhibition

1. Date

- November 5th, 2025 - January 4th, 2026
- 10:00 - 18:00 | Tuesday - Sunday

2. Address

- 58-4, Samcheong-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

3. Inquiry

- contemporary@barakat.kr
- +82 2 730 1948

1. About the Artist

Nikita Gale (b. 1983, Anchorage, Alaska)

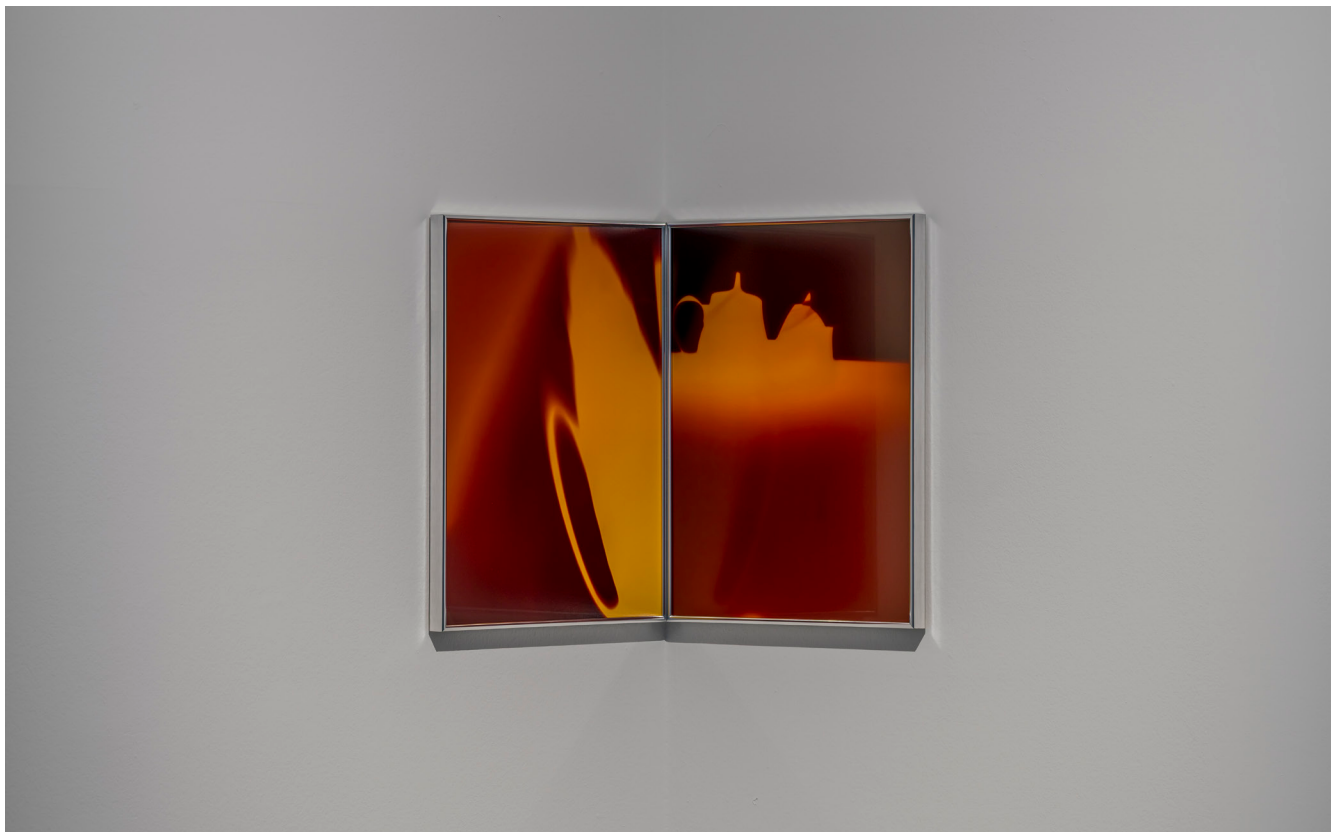
Nikita Gale (b.1983) was born in Anchorage, Alaska, and is currently based in Los Angeles, California. Gale received B.A. in Anthropology (Archaeological Studies) from Yale University in 2006, and M.F.A. in New Genres from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2016. In 2019, Nikita Gale attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Madison, Maine, further expanding Gale's artistic practice.

In 2024, the artist received the prestigious Bucksbaum Award—a major honor in American contemporary art—for *TEMPO RUBATO (STOLEN TIME)*, presented at the Whitney Biennial. Gale's major works, *END OF SUBJECT* (2022), *PRIVATE DANCER* (2021), and *AUDIENCING* (2020), reference performance and mainstream media through gestures of absence, foregrounding instead the stage apparatus, technical infrastructure, and processes of installation and dismantling that often go unnoticed by the viewer. In doing so, the invisible labor behind the stage becomes visible, and the institutional powers and structures of consumption are laid bare. Standing before Gale's works, the viewer is no longer a passive consumer but is confronted with the very meaning of the stage itself and the power dynamics that sustain it. Nikita Gale's practice thus continues to shift the question "Who is onstage?" toward a deeper inquiry: "What does the stage itself signify?"

Nikita Gale has presented solo and group exhibitions at leading museums and institutions worldwide, including the Hawai'i Triennial (Hawai'i, 2025), Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen, 2025), Whitney Biennial (New York, 2024), Taipei Biennial (Taipei, 2023), and Performa Biennial (New York, 2023). Gale's work has also been shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia (2023, Philadelphia), ICA Carnegie Mellon (Pittsburgh), Chisenhale Gallery (London), LAXART (Los Angeles), MoMA PS1 (New York), Kunstraum Kreuzberg (Berlin), Swiss Institute (New York), Nottingham Contemporary (Nottingham), Anchorage Museum (Anchorage), California African American Museum (Los Angeles), The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), Atlanta Contemporary (Atlanta), and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles).

Gale's works are included in major public and private collections worldwide, including the Akeroyd Collection, Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), Kadist Art Foundation, Marieluise Hessel Collection, LACMA's Moen Art Collective, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Tate (London), The Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York).

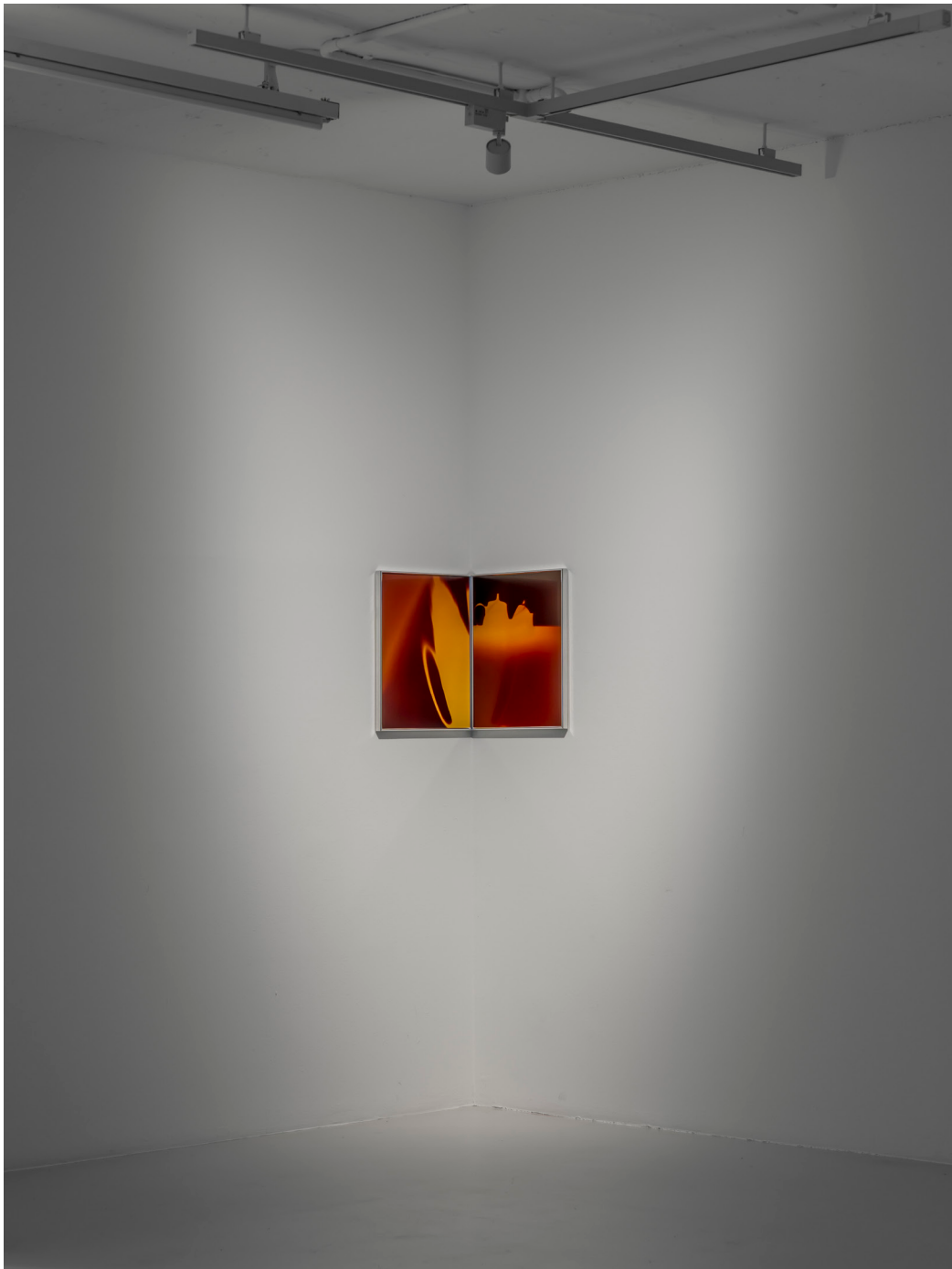
2. Selected Works



Nikita Gale, (left) *DREAM 7*, (right) *DREAM 5*, 2025.

Colour photogram, 40 x 50 cm, framed: 41.5 x 50 cm.

Photo: Jeon Byung-cheol, image courtesy of Barakat Contemporary.



Nikita Gale, (left) *DREAM 7*, (right) *DREAM 5*, 2025.

Colour photogram, 40 x 50 cm, framed: 41.5 x 50 cm.

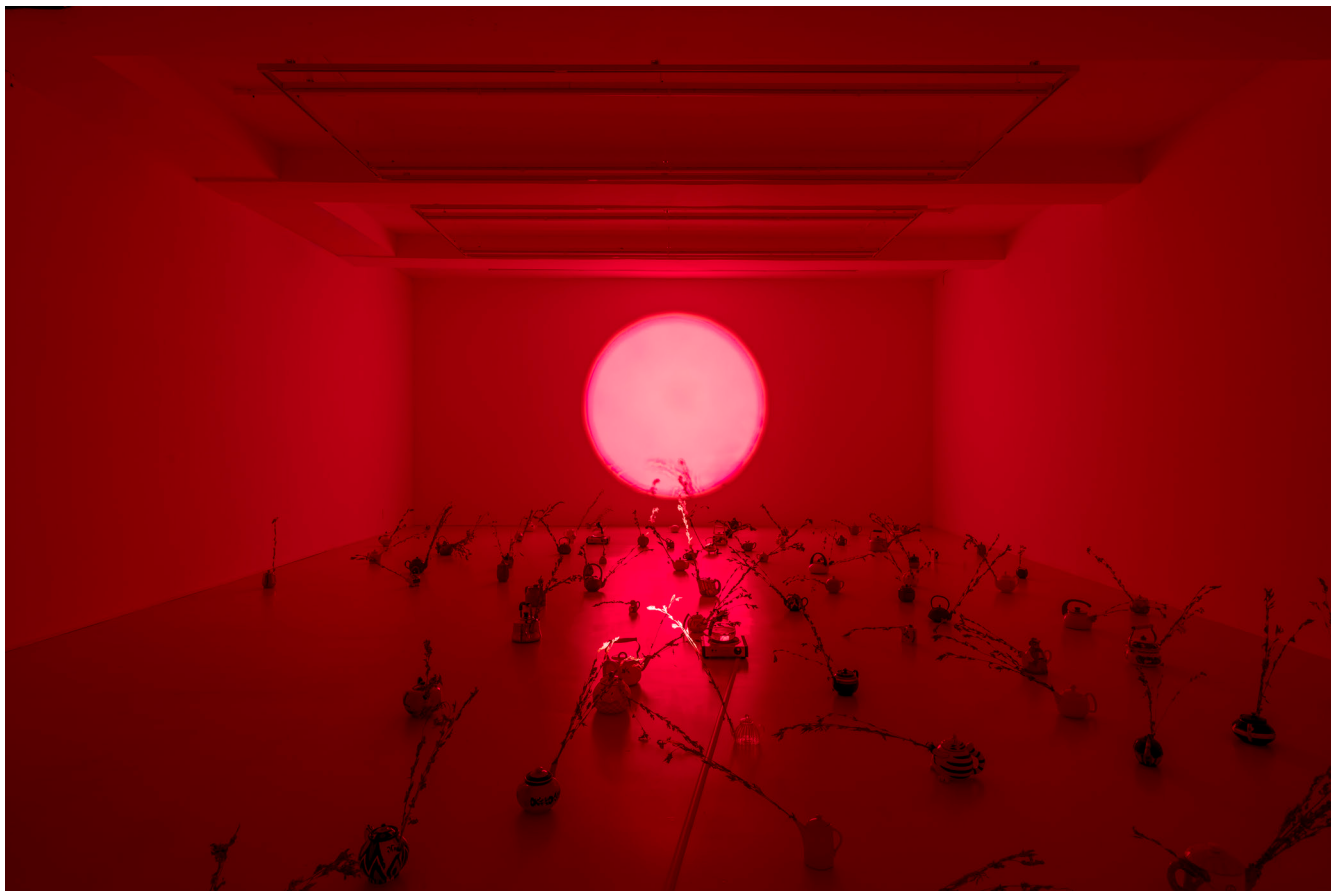
Photo: Jeon Byung-cheol, image courtesy of Barakat Contemporary.

3. Installation views



Installation view of *Nikita Gale: 99 DREAMS*, 2025, Barakat Contemporary, Seoul, Korea.

Photo: Jeon Byung-cheol, image courtesy of Barakat Contemporary.



Installation view of *Nikita Gale: 99 DREAMS*, 2025, Barakat Contemporary, Seoul, Korea.
Teapots, mugwort, tea kettles, hot plates, Power and LED lighting system, dimension and duration variable.

Lighting Design: Josephine Wang.

Photo: Jeon Byung-cheol, image courtesy of Barakat Contemporary.



Installation view of *Nikita Gale: 99 DREAMS*, 2025, Barakat Contemporary, Seoul, Korea.

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