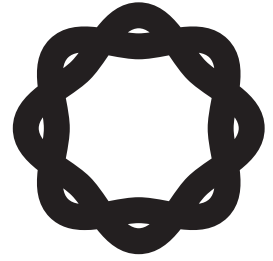


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URGENT CARE

JUSTINE DI FIORE

March 21 - May 2, 2026

Dreamsong is pleased to present *Urgent Care*, Los Angeles-based artist Justine Di Fiore's debut solo exhibition with Dreamsong. Drawing on years of work in Minneapolis as a nursing assistant and the experience of caring for her mother at the end of her life, Di Fiore's oil paintings and works on Yupo paper depict supine bodies being held, soothed and lulled. Working on heavily sanded canvases that accentuate her expressive brushstrokes, the artist builds transitory, aqueous environments whose ambiguous relationship between fore- and background suggests a continuity between this world and the next. Evocative of depictions of nurturing and care from the Renaissance through Modernism, including Michelangelo's *Pietà* and Henry Moore's wartime drawings of Londoners sheltering in the city's underground, Di Fiore's elegiac figures are posed unclothed, like bathers on the banks of the mythical river Lethe.

Throughout her decades-long career as a nursing assistant, Di Fiore was intimately involved in her patients' well-being: washing, repositioning, feeding and conversing with them. This compassionate labor had a profound effect on the artist's understanding of the relationship between our bodies, mortality and the practice of caregiving. Viewing the latter as a sacred act, Di Fiore sought to translate her experience

into painting, experimenting with pictorial and material techniques that replicate acts of care and embody the poetics of touch. Working with a softly earthen palette whose densely layered brushstrokes resolve to varying levels of clarity, Di Fiore's female figures are often rendered almost translucently, as if permeating the water, or the ground. Behind them, the presence of spectral bodies suggest – if not ancestry – than a lineage of commonality, an ongoing community of care.

Di Fiore's insistence that strength is predicated on vulnerability grounds *Urgent Care* in our tenuous present. During a moment of national civic crisis where mutual aid and neighborly care have proven to be indispensable antidotes to the brutality of American immigration enforcement, Di Fiore's recognition of the inherent dignity of vulnerability contains renewed potency. There is a vertiginous loneliness inherent to precarious, life-altering situations such as serious illness, living without documentation, and the terror of war. Small countervailing gestures – bathing someone, delivering their meals, comforting them – adopt significant meaning when they become a ritualized part of social practice.

Di Fiore begins her paintings by making loose marks that mimic the gestural experience of washing a body. Like

the lingering memory of touch, these marks accumulate, forming figures and watersheds that run together, collapsing past into present and embodying the cyclical rhythms of death and rebirth. In *Nurse* (2026), a female figure cradles her own body as she might a child's, securely and tenderly, beneath the watchful gaze of figures whose faces coalesce in the grove behind her. In *Tempest* (2026), a woman lies supine in a river as her reflection materializes into someone new, passing beneath the water's shimmering surface. Di Fiore's time spent caring for those with faltering bodies casts her practice as a kind of anointment – applying a different kind of oil to summon the sacred from the profane.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Justine Di Fiore is a Los Angeles based visual artist. She was born in Monterey, CA and grew up in the Bronx, NY. Prior to moving to California in 2021 she lived in Minneapolis, MN where she worked as a hospital nursing assistant for 27 years. She holds a BA (1990) in Studio Art from Oberlin College and an MFA (2023) in Art Studio from the University of California, Davis. At UC Davis she was the recipient of several awards including a Graduate Research Award and the Dean's Summer Graduate Fellowship. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Manetti Shrem Museum, Davis, CA; UC Irvine Art History Association, Irvine, CA; Marrow Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Collar Works, Albany, NY; Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA; Middle Room, Los Angeles, CA; and Dreamsong, Minneapolis, MN. Recent exhibitions include a solo show at The Bunker LA, Los Angeles, CA; and a group show at CULT Aimee Friberg, San Francisco, CA. *Care on Canvas*, a conversation with Dan Wang was recently published in *Landscapes/A Blade of Grass*. Justine has taught painting and drawing at the University of California, Davis and is currently an adjunct instructor at Mount Saint Mary's University and Chaffey College. Her work is currently on view in *Open Inquiry: UC Arts*, Sausalito Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA.

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