Natasha Verbeke
I cried to dream again
July 10 - August 22, 2026

Franz Kaka is pleased to announce *I cried to dream again*, Natasha Verbeke's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Verbeke's paintings hold landscape in a state of partial recognition. Gardens, fountains, architectural fragments, and passages of sky and water appear and recede through the movement of paint, shifting between image, memory, and gesture. Working from photographs, illustrations, and art historical reproductions, Verbeke approaches the referent image as an inherited patriarchal structure to be rebuilt, interrupted, and revised. Her paintings evoke landscape while keeping the conditions of their making at the surface.

The works in *I cried to dream again* emerge from Verbeke's ongoing interest in gardens as aesthetic, historical, and psychological sites. Many of the paintings draw from images of Italian Renaissance gardens, in particular the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, where elaborate fountains, terraces, grottoes, and mythological programs were commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este as expressions of power, ambition, and taste. Rather than treating this source material as a stable point of reference, Verbeke uses it as a point of departure for paintings that remain unsettled between pleasure and complication, ornament and force, construction and dissolution.

Throughout the exhibition, paint carries much of this tension. Sweeping strokes, thin washes, dense accumulations, scraped passages, and sudden marks register the physical process of making and unmaking the image. Verbeke often begins with an idea of the composition, but allows the painting to shift as it develops. Forms are built up, obscured, wiped down, and found again. In this process, the possibility of unravelling remains active. A painting may become too descriptive, too resolved, or too attached to an initial mark, requiring the surface to be broken open again.

This openness gives the works their particular charge. In *an ear, a whirlpool* (2026), water, architecture, foliage, and atmosphere seem to extend beyond the edge of the canvas, suggesting a world larger than what is pictured. In smaller works such as *Bed of dragons* (2026) the garden is compressed into a sequence of gestures, where fountains become arcs of pale blue, stonework becomes a rhythm of grey and cream, and vegetation gathers into moving fields of green. The paintings are intimate in scale but expansive in implication, using the limits of the surface to propose spaces that feel provisional, unstable, and alive.

For Verbeke, painting is a way of holding sensation rather than developing a narrative. Her marks do not simply describe a place; they register the movement of looking, remembering, and deciding. The garden appears as an image, but also as a field of painterly action, a site where beauty is produced through friction, revision, and the continual risk of change.

Natasha Verbeke (b. 1991, Vancouver, Canada; lives and works in Toronto, Canada) received an MFA from the University of Guelph (2025) and a BFA from NSCAD University (2020). Selected solo exhibitions have been held at Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph (2025); Lalani Jennings, Guelph (2023); and Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax (2020). Selected group exhibitions have been held at Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto (2025, 2024); Stadium Projects, Guelph (2025); Zavitz Gallery, Guelph (2024, 2023); and The Craig Gallery, Dartmouth (2022). Verbeke was the runner up for the Plaskett Award (2025) and has been awarded numerous grants from the Canada Council for the Arts (2023, 2021). Residencies include The Florence Academy of Art, Florence (2023), and the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning, Dartmouth (2021).