



Installation view, photography by Mason Kuehler

Mother, May I?

Miranda Byk

Opening reception November 13, 2022 12pm-4pm

Sow & Tailor is proud to present *Mother, May I?*, the first solo exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist **Miranda Byk** (b. 1994, Ventura, CA), on view from November 13 to December 18, 2022. An opening reception for the artist will be held on November 13 from 12PM-4PM.

Miranda Byk spent her childhood escaping Los Angeles's urbanism in the lush gardens of her grandparents' home. She immersed herself in a world of fantasy with the encouragement of family members, who role played as witches and wrote her letters authored by fairies. As a child, Byk was acting out fictional plays she wrote and directed with friends, obsessing over the anthropomorphic fantasy world of *Alice in Wonderland*, and losing herself in the cinematic universe of Jim Henson, citing the cult classic film *Labyrinth* (1986) as an influence.



The series of oil-on-canvas paintings in *Mother, May I?* can be likened to a dream; they offer a glimpse into Byk's subconscious mind, subtly expressing her anxieties and traumas, with surreal imagery from the artist's strong imagination. The canvases are also a nod to *Agnes Pelton* (1881 – 1961), a pioneering American artist Byk admires. Pelton's meditative symbolist paintings, like Byk's canvases, are rooted in material reality while serving as portals to other realms. Inspired by nature photography found in her vintage *National Geographic* collection, Byk creates paintings that are otherworldly and often nonsensical while exploring ideas around the cyclicity of time, the ephemerality and fragility of nature, and the abstract moral dilemma of good versus evil.

References to the cycle of life and death are prevalent throughout many of her paintings. In one work the shadow of a butterfly reflects on a cracked egg, from which a caterpillar emerges. In another, a dew drop on a passion flower leaf replaces an embryonic sac. The passage of time is an anxious phenomenon in Byk's paintings. For example, one canvas depicts two mischievous praying mantis gazing back at us, the viewers, as they are caught in the act of knocking over an hourglass. "Time's up," Byk notes. "The presence of everything we see in nature and our own time here is limited. We take this for granted."

In the complex and layered painting *Pas de Deux* (2022), Byk becomes the protagonist. Clutching a puppet, a metaphor for control, her figure is enveloped by hairy plants. The dew drops, a common motif in the exhibition, serve as containers for tiny universes and are nostalgic for Byk, who spent hours observing them as a child. At the top left of the painting emerges an observing eye, another reoccurring motif, while a procession of ants marches to its destination in the foreground. The tone of the painting is ambiguous, leaving viewers to interpret its message as they please.

Byk's debut exhibition is an invitation to enter a space of fantasy and contemplate one's relationship to both nature and time. "Life exists in every little thing," Byk states. "These small details in nature help us realize that we are not the center of the universe."

Text by Tina Barouti



Miranda Byk (b. 1994, Ventura, CA, USA) is a Los Angeles based painter and graduate of The San Francisco Art Institute. Creating dream-like vignettes, the haunting and immersive nature of her paintings embody a liminal space. She is interested in themes surrounding cycles of life and time, capturing the ephemerality of existence through details in nature. Her most recent group exhibition was at K11 Musea, Hong Kong (2022) as well as the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles (2022); Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles (2021, 2022); Make Room, Los Angeles (2021); As It Stands, Los Angeles (2021).

Tina Barouti, PhD is an art historian and curator based in Los Angeles. Most recently, she was the Brooks International Fellow at Tate Modern's curatorial department and a resident at the Delfina Foundation. Currently, she is a Lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Sow & Tailor is a family run gallery in Los Angeles, dedicated to supporting emerging artists through exhibitions and various projects. Our aim is to foster a space where a local and global community of creatives can thrive. The gallery was founded as a family run project between artist Greg Ito, his wife Karen Galloway, and family friend Stefano di Paola. The project opened two months following the birth of Karen and Greg's daughter, Spring, as the idea that this would be a family business she could grow up around, participate in, and ultimately inherit.

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