

Nabeeha Mohamed
Tending Bell Flowers
27th October – 2 December 2023



Nabeeha Mohamed, *St Josephs and the Bell Flowers*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 170 x 150 x 8 cm

Gallery 1957 is proud to present a new solo exhibition by Cape Town-based artist Nabeeha Mohamed titled *Tending Bell Flowers*. The show, which is Mohamed's first body of work to be shown at the gallery's London space after her 2022 solo presentation in Accra, sees her turning towards a poetics and aesthetics of tending.

In this body of work "tending" becomes a sight of individual and collective tenderness, in a blossoming visual garden springing from a poetics and imagining of care and (self)recovery. Consisting of paintings and sculptural works, Mohamed's exhibition feels like an evocative visual call to action towards self-care and self-preservation through flower arrangements and self-portraits, sculptures of elongated surreal high-heels and landscape paintings.

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As Mohamed explains: *‘The idea of ‘tending’ was something that came up in my last body of work: I was building this language of sculpturally creating these flowers and I mean, I’ve done it in other things not only my flowers, but it’s the flowers that I feel have really come alive in that language. I felt like a gardener or like I was cultivating these flowers. Imagined and not, they’ve always kind of spawned from something I see but they become their own thing as I’m building them... And so, I think that the notion of ‘tending’ came to me in the same way as when you are cultivating or when you are gardening. It’s quite a gentle and slow process. There’s love and care that goes into it.’*

The array of landscape paintings sees her returning to Boschenheuvel Arboretum, a site less than a kilometre from where she grew up, subject of a historic land claim by some of the original landowners who were removed during Apartheid in South Africa.

This time, however, the significance of Boschenheuvel Arboretum in the visual topography of her new exhibition has shifted from histories and politics of displacement, ‘home’ and inequality, to evoke a pastoral aesthetic and sentiment, one that signals towards rest, slowing it down, coming up for air, catching your breath.

Looking at the material surface of the landscape paintings, brought to life by Mohamed’s bold and expressive paint application and the vibrancy of her colours, what ebbs at the centre is an interrogation of a revolutionary and radical poetics of rest and care within a social matrix that equates productivity to worth. In communion the portraits could be read as piecing together a space of ontological possibilities where it is possible to recover one’s subjectivity through care and rest.

Tending Bell Flowers is accompanied by a critical essay by Lindi Mngxitama.

About the Artist

Nabeeha Mohamed (b. 1988, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town) studied at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. Her very personal work grapples with the contradictions of identity and class privilege in post-Apartheid South Africa. Her position as a woman of colour, hushed during her childhood years in an attempt to assimilate to the white society and culture she grew up in, is now celebrated in her paintings where colour and strangeness take centre stage. These celebrations of identity are intersected with a playful critique of the capitalist economy and class privilege from which she benefits.

Solo exhibitions include *Vanitas Woe*, WhatiftheWorld, Cape Town, South Africa (2023), *Same sky, different fruit*, Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2022); *Brown Petal*, The Vault, Silo Hotel, Cape Town (2021); *Dressing Room*, WhatiftheWorld, Cape Town (2021); *Sunshine on my skin is my favourite colour*, SMITH, Cape Town (2020). Mohamed has participated in group exhibitions locally and internationally including *The Floral Impulse*, David Castillo, Miami (2022), *Postcards*, Galleri Magnus Karlsson (2021), *Self-Identity in the Face of the Global Pandemic*, Gallery 1957, London (2021); *Liminality in Infinite Space*, African Artists’ Foundation, Lagos (2020); *Melancholympics*, The Wunderwall, PLUS- ONE Gallery, Antwerp

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(2020); *Don't Give A Damns*, Marian Cramer Projects, Amsterdam (2020); *Rendezvous II*, SMITH, Cape Town (2019); *Speculative Enquiry #1 On Abstraction*, Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town (2019); *Bad Taste: Image in Crisis*, SMITH Cape Town (2019); *Outside*, RK Contemporary, Cape Town (2019) and *Know this place?*, KZNSA, Durban (2019). Mohamed has participated in the following fairs: MiArt, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Art Rotterdam, FNB Art Joburg and 1-54 New York, as well as residencies at Gallery 1957 (Accra), The Artist's Press (White River), Casa de Ilhabela (Ilhabela) and at the gallery (Johannesburg).

About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK. It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues - continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

Artist: Nabeeha Mohamed

Title: *Tending to Bell Flowers*

Dates: 27th October – 2 December 2023

Opening Reception: Thursday 26th October 6-9pm

Address: Gallery 1957, 1 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5EW

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