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Rithika Merchant Summons Ancient Mythology and Mysticism in 'The Dreaming Realm'

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Kate Mothes

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In surreal tableaux, mythological creatures interact with flora and fauna within dream-like realms. Insects, stars, metaphysical tendrils, and all-seeing eyes accompany human bodies with the heads of raptors. Rithika Merchant's strange yet alluring symmetry contains what may be esoteric rituals or communions with the natural world. Each speculative, fable-like narrative taps into our collective anxiety about the environment and hope for healing.

Merchant's vibrant new body of work centers on hybrid creatures and a sense of the sacred, comprising the Mumbai-based artist's solo exhibition *The Dreaming Realm* at Galerie LJ. She harnesses elemental phenomena like the earth, plants, fire, water, and the stars to emphasize both volatility and strength. Amid scenes of floods and eruptions, individuals participate in enigmatic activities or ceremonies exemplifying cooperation and determination.



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Merchant incorporates "theoretical, historical, and iconographic references, drawing notably on the notion of empirical experience based on sensory perception, the Greek concept of Kairos to question the subjectivity of time, as well as research on the Beguines of the Middle Ages," the gallery says. The Beguines were a unique lay community of financially independent Christian women who occasionally practiced mysticism. Some communities in western Europe still exist today.

In *The Dreaming Realm*, the artist nods to symbols of consciousness and transformation. For example, the luna moth evokes the power of intuition and transitions, while ravens represent wisdom, foresight, and a bridge to other realms. Communality forms a conceptual nucleus of Merchant's paintings, especially in her ongoing series *Interspecies Care*, which focuses "on social organization, interdependence, reciprocity between species, and knowledge sharing," the gallery says.

The Dreaming Realm continues through November 21 in Paris. See more on Merchant's Instagram. ◆



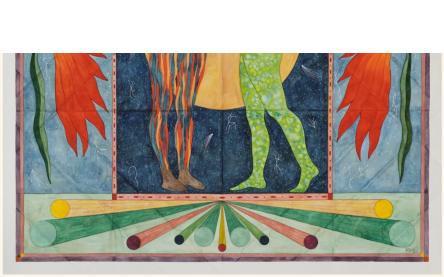
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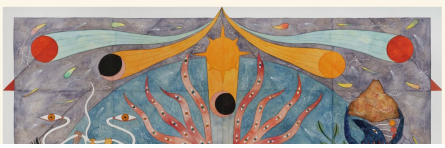








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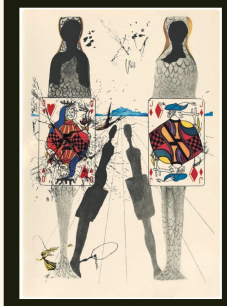
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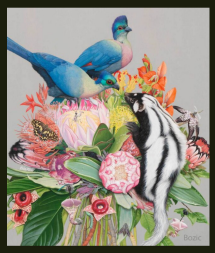
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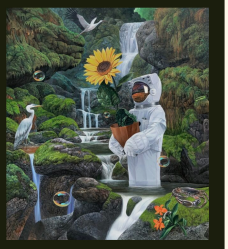
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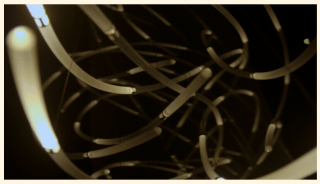
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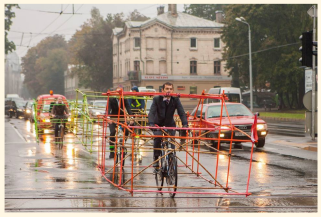
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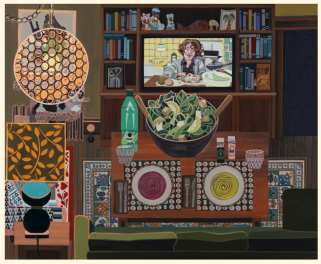
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