

**Mary SHAH**

BECOMING MORE LIKE AIR  
JANUARY 24 – MARCH 2, 2019



*Marie (How Do You Paint a Spirit?)*, 2018,  
Oil on panel, 16 x 20 inches. © 2018 Mary SHAH.

*They both listened silently to the water, which to them was not just water, but the voice of life, the voice of Being, the voice of perpetual Becoming.*  
- Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Rick Wester Fine Art is pleased to present *Becoming More Like Air*, an exhibition of new paintings and watercolors by Mary Shah. It will be the artist's second showing with the gallery. Her first, *A Place In Space Where We Both Meet* in April 2016, established Ms. Shah as a painter capable of both a universal visionary expression of personal loss and a subtle painterly technique of exquisite control in color and surface. In her recent work, the homage to her deceased brother has been replaced by a celebration of life, spurred on by the birth of her son,

so that the cycle of life is reconciled. That theme is visually realized by her flowing, liquid hand and subtle pastel palette.

*Becoming More Like Air*, as Ms. Shah describes it, is the “flip side of the same coin” where she finds a visceral pleasure in painting spiritual places, sometimes lending a quiet, meditative atmosphere to the work, and at others rendering the panel paintings with a vibrant, effervescent compositional construct and a daring commitment to broad color scheme with widely varying brush work and depth built up by layers of thinned pigment. Similar to her earlier paintings, the works shown are informed by emotional memory associations, being dreamlike and fantastic.

In *Marie (How Do You Paint a Spirit?)*, 2018 for example, the title refers to a Townes Van Zandt song used in the film *Blaze*, about the country singer Blaze Foley, directed by Ethan Hawke. In a particular scene the Van Zandt character (played by the singer/songwriter Charlie Sexton) plays and sings the song *Marie*. The early morning light, the scenery and the woeful tune all combined to elicit a mnemonic visual reaction in the artist, resulting in a fluid scene of peach and lilac light that is of the moment but redolent of past experience. Neither landscape nor seascape, solid ground nor rippling waves, the painting is a meditation on surfaces in the world and in painting.

Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, with its themes of spiritual quest and enlightenment, was a natural source of inspiration over the past year of painting for her. *The River, The Ferryman*, a direct reference to the tale, is a visual equivalent to the journey Siddhartha takes with the Ferryman Vasudeva, whom he had not seen in over twenty years. Thematically, the story is about the weaving of past, present and future time, leading to the conclusion that the river's secret is that “there is no time.” This is reflected in the watery and blended pastel colors forming an abstract delta and continuing beyond the frame of the work.

Mary Shah is the director at Lennon Weinberg, Inc., a contemporary art gallery in Chelsea. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and son. Her work is in numerous private collections throughout the United States.

The exhibition opens January 24th and runs through March 2, 2019.

Gallery hours are Tuesdays by appointment, Wednesday - Friday, 10 am to 6 pm; Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm.