

An Artist Who Matters: Hung Viet Nguyen Coming to Matter Gallery

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Opening December 8th at Matter Gallery in mid-city, Hung Viet Nguyen's *Chances Matter* is a dazzling new body of work, his first in which the human figure plays a central part in his highly textured, immersive landscapes. The exhibition marks a new direction for the artist. While continuing his masterful work in oil and palette knife, building up and manipulating his paint as if sculpting it, he now paints human subjects with a greater emphasis. The new prominence of humans speaks to both our coexistence in and joy of nature, but also to our effect upon it, from climate change to a self-absorption with our cell phones that may preclude the ability to be one with the natural environment around us.

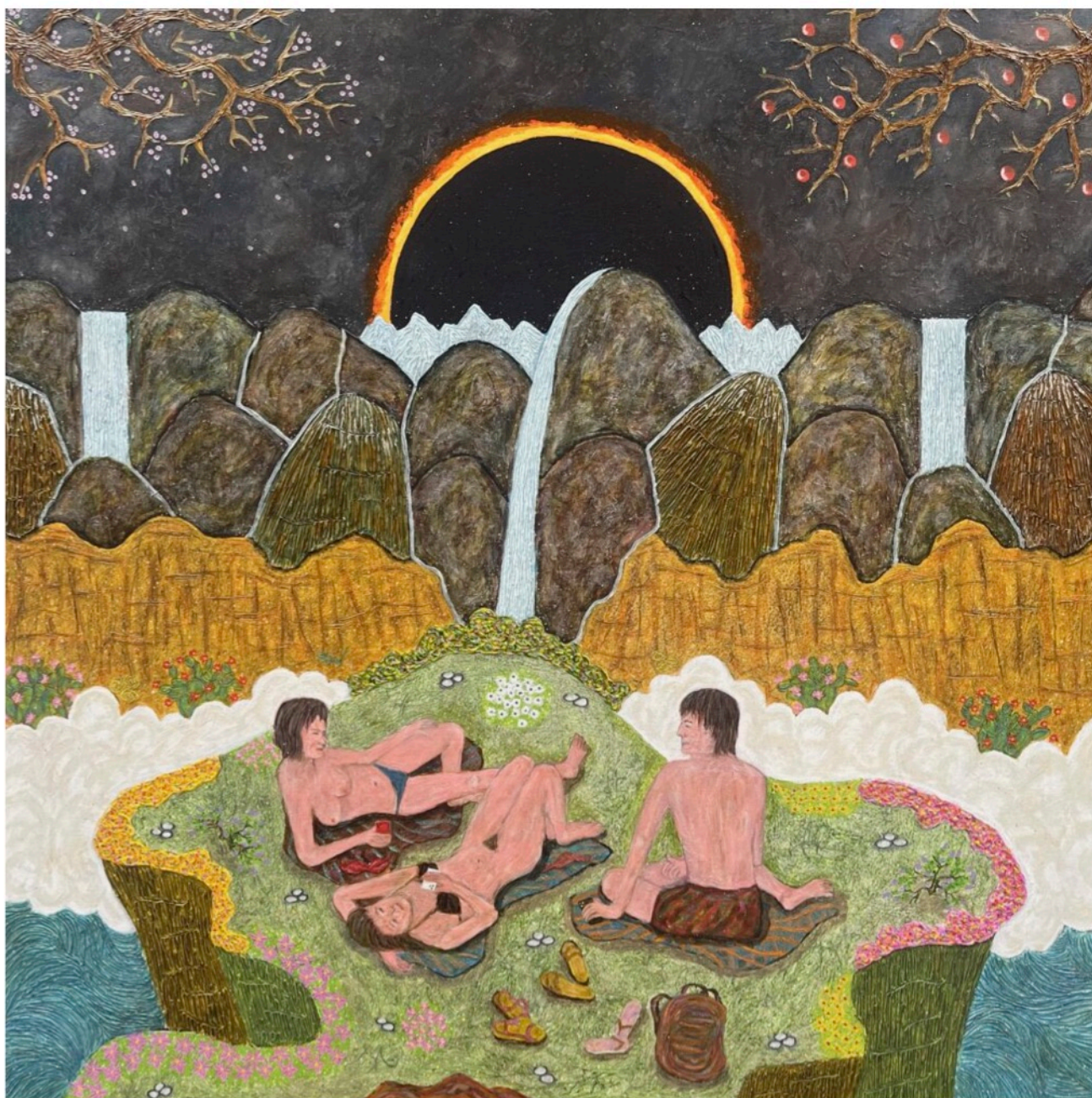
When adding the human figure into the pristine yet entirely alive natural landscapes that he paints, Nguyen reveals that he's not judging the intervention of humans – that judgment resides with viewers. He fully embraces the idea that while we can never regret experiencing beauty, we cannot control the outcome of our experience of it, one which affects not only us personally, but nature itself.



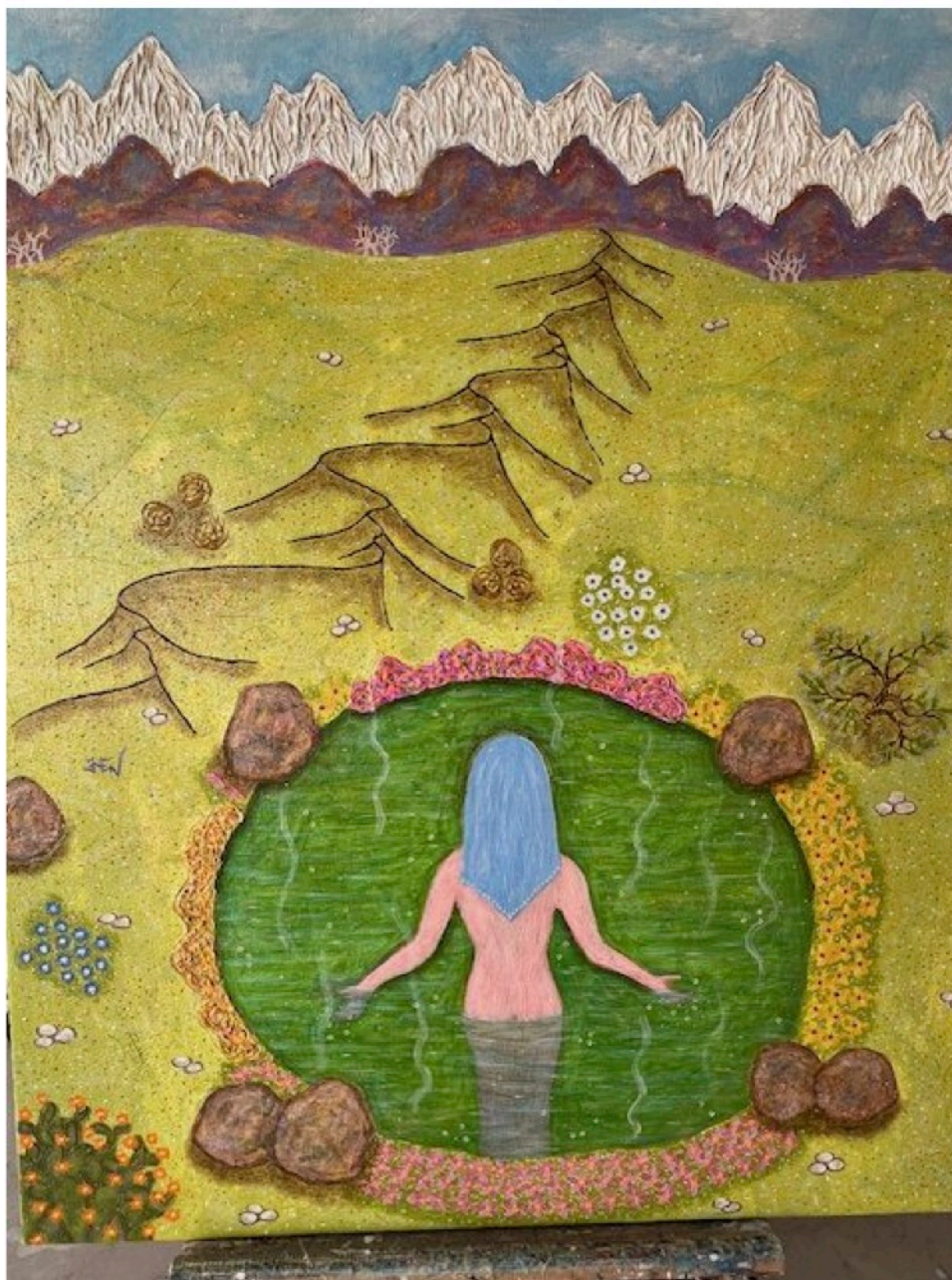
In "Hot Springs Bathers," the human figures remain oblivious to jet trails in the sky that could represent wildly increased travel or an on-coming war. Above these floats what could be another view of the earth as if seen from a 360-degree perspective looking backwards, or another planet falling from the sky, also blissfully ignored by the human figures below. Startlingly vivid colors and the dichotomy of tranquility with possibly ominous outcomes creates a visceral tension in the work.



Likewise, Nguyen's "Tomorrow Won't Be the Same," above, fully embraces a belief he expresses that change will come, regardless of the hour, for good or ill. Here we see viewers taking a selfie in front of a beautiful waterfall, obviously standing near a growing crack in the ground.



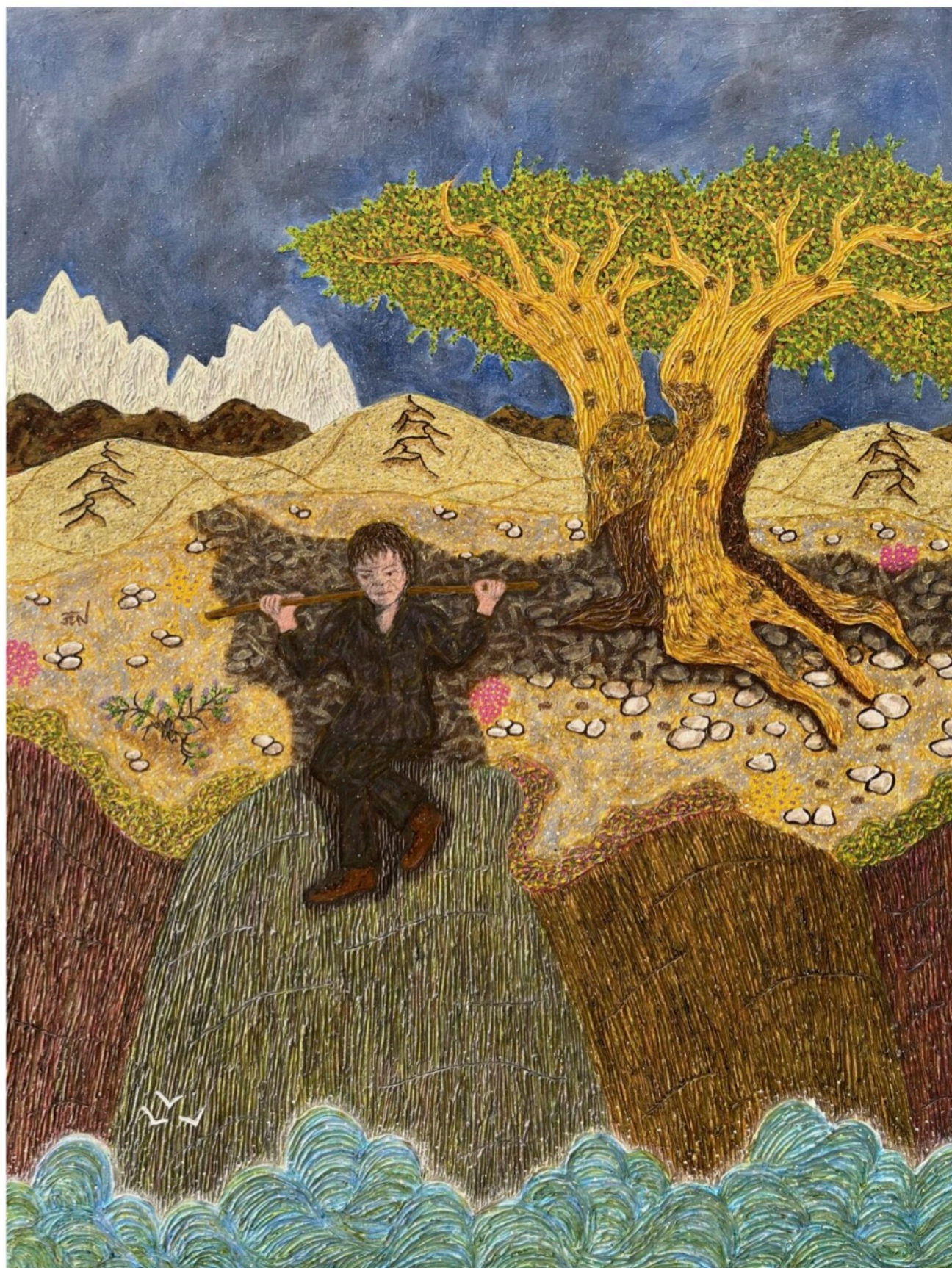
“Eclipse” shows the sun nearly fully occluded by the moon, leaving a stunning Ring of Fire. Below this astonishing spectacle, two women and a man, mostly naked, relax on the grass, cell phones in hand, small parts of the cosmic show.



In "Self-Baptism," the human figure is what draws the viewer most fully. This figure wears a blue scarf as she enters the water of a flower-ringed, steaming spring.



Although many settings in Nguyen's new series are inspired by locations such as Iceland and the greater Mammoth Lakes area, "Journey Through Dry Lake" was inspired by the desert terrain of the Salton Sea. Here the human subject is carrying a boat across a dry lakebed speckled with dead fish; the artist's "Contemplating," below, reveals a man holding a stick against his shoulders behind his head, a position of relaxation that also recalls the crucifixion; sacrifice and acceptance in this pose.



While each of the above works are large, there are a range of smaller artworks as well, many featuring Nguyen's arched gates, waterfalls, and snowy mountains, each perfectly rendered. He is also including a series of images created in tins, displayed as if they were open lockets; many

which feature more of this evocative human subjects.



Do be sure to catch this meaningful show – your chance to see it matters!



Matter Studio Gallery is located at 5080 W. Pico Boulevard LA, CA 90019. The exhibition will be up through January the 5th.