ARTFORUM

Maysha Mohamedi

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY
327 Broome Street
Online exhibition

Maysha Mohamedi, *Golliwogg's Cakewalk, No. 6 (Debussy),* 2020, oil and enamel on canvas, 17 x 15".

In alchemy, the action happens inside the vessel: The container is typically transparent, which allows us to see the grit of transmutation. The ten paintings that comprise Maysha Mohamedi's "Salt Pepper Prophecy" transform lyrical abstraction into a kind of visual hermeneutics. The works are more than pretty: Mohamedi seems to be impelled by a quest for truth—the darker, freakier parts of living and the imperfect beauty of daily life. Her palette is inspired by an illustrated cookbook that was published by *Family Circle* in 1972. Cooking, another alchemical proposition, combines mathematics and a deft touch. These images summon nature's seductive geometries, where ingredients are both prophecy and recollection. While nodding to moments of art-science conflation, Mohamedi's work resists the hypnotic marvels of divine order and takes us straight into the belly of the vessel.

Frenetic, Twomblyesque marks—nods to Farsi, Mohamedi's native tongue—dance across juicy swaths of tangerine, pink, and warm cherry. These strokes feel less like meaning-making and more like subterranean transcriptions which, somehow, seem to get at the gnarled roots of language itself. Yet, throughout it all, Mohamedi never loses her sense of humor. *Turning, Twisting, World*, where dreary splotches of blue and gray get infused by swipes of orange, hangs beside *Golliwogg's Cakewalk, No. 6 (Debussy)* (both 2020), a smaller confection done in cotton-candy pink, periwinkle, and various shades of strawberry. The pair's dissimilar proportions funnily disrupt comfort. In this show, the viewer sees what's congealing inside the pot—or, rather, the many pots at varying temperatures and textures on the painter's stove. Beholding this kind of calculated chaos feels like a relief during our own incalculable pandemonium.

— *Emmalea Russo*