

***The Listening World:***  
**Bianca Nemelec and Caris Reid at Louis Buhl & Co.**

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(Left) *Shapeshifters*, 2024. *The Visitor*, 2024 by Bianca Nemelec. (Right) *Soft Signal*, 2024 by Caris Reid

The sacred spaces of the modern world have silence. They are installed into societies like oases, to nurture meditations on mortality, immortality, and the divine. Their carefully curated aesthetics become avenues to an Eden of infinity that is invulnerable to time and space. Ancient civilizations called them umbilici, connecting points between heaven and earth. Whatever exists inside these holy zones becomes a captive of the concept of permanence, existing parallel to our imperfect and ephemeral nature. But the notion of timelessness as the conduit to God has, of course, become twisted these days. Shallow attempts to evade the effects of time barter ancestral traits for synthetic bodies in the latest chapter of our exodus *out of the wild*.

*The Listening World* at Louis Buhl & Co. is a display of paintings by artists whose practices have encouraged contemplation of nature as a welcoming home, accessible in its authentic entirety, just past the veil of civilization. The compositions frame the flora, the fauna, the earth, and the sky in a manner that highlights an innate mimesis. Mirroring is a phenomenon that wraps the planet, with the human body comprising some of the most common forms in this vast network of familial characteristics. Subtly figurative illusions in the paintings of Bianca Nemele feature the feminine as a source of nourishment, protection, and comfort. Celebrating the female body and its likeness to the earth is a theme dating back to prehistoric times and continues into the present day, although it shows up more as a symbolic gesture than a lived reality in contemporary society. Provocative predecessors like Georgia O'Keeffe, Ana Mendieta, Judy Chicago, and Louise Bourgeois unconventionally spotlighted the curves and the folds of the woman. Nemele continues this lineage of reverence while also drawing inspiration from her upbringing in Washington Heights—a New York City neighborhood hugged by the Hudson River. Her unique perspective has allowed her to simultaneously grow up with both the natural world and the robust city. These two concurrent systems usually clash or avoid each other; rarely can they live in symbiosis.



*The Seeds That Were Planted*, 2024. Bianca Nemele





*Birth of a Sun and Day*, 2024. Bianca Nemelec



*Astral Symphony (in blue)*, 2024. Caris Reid

The sublime tranquility experienced on the bank of a river can also be experienced in a gallery space—which quiets the urban bustle enough to ponder without distraction. The title of this exhibition inspires an awareness of listening, and the potentials that it holds as a practice. Aided by the subject matter as well, our minds can imagine an interspecies sonic exchange framed with brief moments of stillness. Here, the abstract symphony of white noise is birdsong, flowing water, the wind...The viewer is brought into a trance by the hypnotic night scenes of Caris Reid. Complementing the transposing forms introduced by Nemelc’s daytime scenes, Reid explores harmony using symmetry and patterns.



*Astral Symphony (in black)*, 2024. Caris Reid

Her work channels an affection for animism also found historically in Surrealist and Symbolist painting. The flowers and the stars are suspended in a dance of wonder like the abstracted backgrounds of Gustav Klimt. Applications of space vary from flat to slight depth, like the compositions of Odilon Redon. These illustrative techniques are frequently employed in art that has religious or esoteric intent, perhaps because of the vibrational visual effect they can have on the eye of the viewer. Reid’s practice as an artist is invested in queer ecology, astrology, and the Tarot, recognizing these assets as active agents in transcendent belief systems shared by both indigenous and modern communities.





*Psychic Soulmates*, 2024. Caris Reid



An aesthetic similarity also exists between the paintings in *The Listening World* and the work of the Precisionists from the 1920-30s. This consideration, for me, incites a thought about typical portrayals of the future. Precisionism was an art movement inspired by Cubism and Futurism, propelled by dreams of boundless industrial achievements and the ever-growing distance from the feral world. It reintroduced structure into compositions through the depiction of the “new” American landscape of skyscrapers, bridges, and factories. Machines were celebrated, over anything else, as a highway to tomorrow. It could very well be just a coincidence brought on by the stylistic preference of Bianca Nemelc and Caris Reid. Nonetheless the decisions executed in their paintings undeniably illuminate the mechanics of the *natural* world, functioning almost as a counterproposal to this future of industrial domination. For the artists of the show, these visions of wildlife, plant life, and rock formations function as dreamscapes of rest, joy, and connection. The function of this art as a portal to another place or time fuels a different kind of faith than the aforementioned holy zones. But, like a hopeful prayer, the *entrance* into the work could also be the *exit* from somewhere else.

*The Listening World* at Louis Buhl & Co. opened on April 20, 2024 and was on view through May 29, 2024.

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\*Photos courtesy of Louis Buhl & Co.