



## Artist Leelee Kimmel Paints 'Like A Game of Twister'

This is the artist's first solo show at Almine Rech, Paris.

Leelee Kimmel in her New York studio, Photo by Jason Schmidt.

Artist Leelee Kimmel is back with her current exhibition at Almine Rech, entitled *Nuwar*—a re-articulation of the words New and War. The exhibition is composed of large-scale abstractions featuring amoebic forms in dense, inchoate and saturated acrylic paint. Graphic lines and pools of thick, unreal colors, almost three-dimensional, weave on and off and interrupt the canvas; her shapes soft and liquid-like.

Kimmel creates her large paintings by laying canvas on the floor in her Manhattan studio and working above them with a unique method of applying paint. "There are so many masters of the brush you can't compete, you can't invent there, so I just started doing it my own way," she tells GARAGE. "When I'm painting, it almost feels like a game of Twister. I'm always in these very uncomfortable, back-tweaked positions." Kimmel's shapes often occupy the center of the canvas and hover away from the borders with traces of the painting process noticeable throughout the work. There appears to be a footprint on one painting. On another, there are tracks where a mouse scampered through the paint.



Leelee Kimmel, *Landing*, 2018, Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech.

Kimmel uses shapes that she auto-generates, bringing forms to mind like an ice cream cone, a sock, quarreling animals, a lipstick, a lake, construction rigs, outer space flagella, a crevasse. In some cases they are images that are wholly original with their own kind of logic. Her paint application is direct, confident, and mature. The canvases are thick with layers       ayers       int, and the surface spans from matte, shiny, spacious, squished, metallic to iridescent. The paintings undulate and jump at one while viewing. As David Rimanelli wrote, "The method of paint application suggests the confectioner; jets       olor mimic frosting. Yet there's a trace of poison—it's a nuclear Betty Crocker bake-off."

Painter Hans Hofmann wrote, "In nature, light creates the color. In the picture, color creates the light." As Kimmel slings color on black canvas, the dark background is both obscured and revealed throughout the scrim       gment. The paintings vibrate. This is illustrated in one large-scale color-saturated painting, *CRISPR*, from 2018, a horizontal canvas spanning 136 inches. The term CRISPR is an acronym for "clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats," a family of DNA sequences within the genomes of prokaryotic organisms such as bacteria and archaea. The sequences, derived from DNA fragments from viruses that have previously infected the prokaryote, are used to destroy DNA from similar viruses.





Detail of Leelee Kimmel, *This High or The Godfather*, 2018. Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech

The paintings webbed-formation remind one of DNA sequences or single-celled microorganisms such as archaea. A domain of life more recently recognized, archaea live in harsh environments, such as [hot springs](#) and [salt lakes](#) with no other organisms. In the text for the exhibition, David Rimanelli describes the forms in the paintings as “something so unmediated that even less conscious animals than ourselves—insects? planaria?—might often see something very similar.” The paintings also remind of the Proterozoic eon, which ranged from 2,500 million years to 500 million years ago, when abstract grains of content became the earliest building blocks for figuration.

Functional contradictions are plentiful in Kimmel’s work. Painter Josef Albers said, “Simultaneous contrast is not just a curious optical phenomenon—it is the very heart of painting.” Kimmel’s shapes are both soft and firm; the paintings have no depth, and an infinite depth. They evade definition and the desire to define. The canvases are large, not quite monumental, yet the experience is intimate, similar to the artist’s explorations into 3D (her virtual reality work should not be missed). The exhibition shows the artist maturing a very broad and a pinpoint clear position. Continuing this series of contrasts, the painted forms are both abstract and

*Nuwar, runs from June 6th to July 27th, 2019 at Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France. This is Kimmel’s first solo exhibition with the gallery. Recent exhibitions include Marlborough Contemporary, New York; Anonymous Gallery, Mexico City; Journal Gallery, Brooklyn; and Simon Lee Gallery, London.*