



# OMNIPRESENCE OR CHANCE

Yvette Gellis

curated by Molly Enholm

**CSUN** | ART  
WEST GALLERY





# OMNIPRESENCE OR CHANCE

By Molly Enholm

Yvette Gellis operates at the crossroads of the visceral and the intellectual, deftly layering charcoal, paint and collaged imaginary to construct Arcadian scenes of the natural environment. Exquisitely tall trees, interrupted by pools of intoxicating teal-blue, reach beyond view punctuated by hypnotically repetitive patterns of splendid orange poppies and wistfully rust-colored leaves. The landscape recedes into a nearly mystical space dissolving in both light and shadow, while pronounced swaths of impasto paint are physical reminders of the artist's presence. She creates this meditative interpretation of the natural world while traversing the ever-shifting boundaries between representation and abstraction, or, rather, between notions of control and elements of chance. The cyclical motif of the leaf provides Gellis with an imagistic structure, surpassing traditional tropes to represent not the ephemeral, but the omnipresent. The walls of the gallery quietly dissolve behind the complex assemblage of canvases, panels and Plexiglas that projects into the physical realm occupied by the viewer. A departure from traditional notions of the landscape, there is no implied narrative here, no defined relationship between humanity and the environment created by the artist and presented to the viewer. Instead, Gellis offers a space to inhabit and meditate upon the notions of chance, choice and the omnipresence of nature.

## About Molly Enholm

Molly Enholm is a notable contemporary art critic, editor, practicing artist and art historian in the Los Angeles art scene. She has contributed to several publication as a freelance editor and contributor, including Fabrik, ArtScene, Hi-Fructose, TheArtStory.org, Art + Cake, Visual Art Source and served for nearly a decade as managing editor of art ltd., the premiere contemporary art publication covering the West Coast and surrounding regions. Ms. Enholm teaches art history and theory courses at California State University Northridge, Laguna College of Art + Design, and Moorpark College. Among her freelance projects, she is the founder of the art news and social media aggregator Art Cites. In 2019, Ms. Enholm curated the innovative, multi-disciplinary exhibition, "Yvette Gellis: Omnipresence or Chance," at the CSUN West Gallery.



## “Omnipresence or Chance” Artist Statement

### Yvette Gellis

It started with one leaf. It was late morning, before the winds had picked up, and I was entering my studio from the street. As I put the key in the door, I looked down, and there on the ground, so perfectly placed as if it had just landed was a beautiful orange-colored leaf, vibrating with powerful energy. It was as if this leaf, this inanimate object, was speaking directly to me, saying, “I am here with you, yes, I am here with you now.” I picked it up and held it, looking at it in my hands. It was so beautiful, a combination of red and orange tones unusual for this particular time of year, as Fall was long past. I immediately recognized that this leaf didn’t belong to any of the trees nearby. So, I walked down the alley looking, nothing. Then, I walked the other direction to the back alley, nothing there either. I began to feel suspicious. No one I knew in the area would leave a leaf like that for me, so where did it come from? I was puzzled, yet struck by the possibility of a connection, it seemed as if the leaf was waiting for me. I brought the leaf inside my studio and set it in a very special spot where I could easily gaze at its beauty. It felt inextricably profound - in this simple leaf I sensed a divine gesture.

Later that month, I sat meditating on a bench in the tranquil 9/11 Memorial Park on Pepperdine’s campus in the Malibu Hills overlooking the ocean. It was very clean as if someone had recently swept the area. When I opened my eyes and leaned over to pick up my bag, there next to me was a perfectly placed Sycamore leaf. I felt that this leaf that had fallen and landed so perfectly next to me was not just a chance falling of any leaf, but something more deeply personal and spiritual connecting me to the landscape.

This began happening regularly - always the same scenario - a leaf appears, one that feels as if set there specifically for me. I started to anticipate these leaves and would catch myself looking for them - is that one, is that one there for me? I started to question whether I might be projecting and began to doubt everything I had experienced. I must be mad, or going insane? And then, it would happen again in some unexpected way. In time, the doubts passed, I came to understand that the depth of this experience was beyond any one leaf, as each leaf became connected to every leaf. Each leaf felt like a joyous flirtation with the Universe, a cosmic romance.

As one leaf soon became many leaves, I thought again of their origins. Once connected to branches of trees from throughout Los Angeles and far beyond, rising from the soil, their roots forming underground networks. From there, my mind raced, considering the complex network of communities, of cities, of countries covering the entire planet that all somehow connected back to that one tiny leaf found at the door of my studio. At that moment, I realized that these leaves were so much more than the tangible objects I could see, but reminders of something infinitely more precious - the human soul - and the connection between all living things on the planet.

The unexpected way this simple leaf entered my life led me to create a body of work that reflects my experience of all that is good and harmonious in this world. That simple choice to pick up a leaf, to embrace the connectivity of nature, that perchance we might move inexorably away from disharmony toward an understanding of universal love. To know there is infinite good in the world, despite the existence of evil, and its omnipresence is, for me, embodied by these simple gestures, by seeing one leaf, one gift, at a time - representing a universal connection. Each leaf then becomes an altar, each leaf is proof of eternal love.

—Yvette Gellis

“Copper Leaf in Refuge” 2019

Oil, acrylic, graphite and paper collage on canvas

82 x 112 inches



"Omnipresence or Chance" 2019  
Oil, graphite, paper, plexiglass  
107 x 111 inches



*"The First Leaf" in plexiglass box, 2019*  
*Background: Installation View Southeast*  
*Mixed media with original leaves*  
*35 feet x 14 feet*





"Poppies in Teal Pools, #1" 2019  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, paper  
65 x 80 inches



*Installation view Northeast, 2019*  
*Mixed media*  
*35 feet x 14 feet*





*Installation view East, 2019*  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, wood, mixed media  
11 feet x 11 feet





*"Sacred Leaves in Gold" 2019*  
Oil, acrylic, graphite and paper collage on  
canvas  
65 x 80 inches



*Installation view Northeast, 2019*  
*Mixed media*  
*45 feet x 22 feet*







"The Vortex" 2019  
Oil, acrylic, graphite and paper collage on canvas  
102 x 66" inches





*Installation view North, 2019  
Mixed media including mylar and original sacred leaves*





*Detail, Original sacred leaves, 2019*  
 plexiglass box, framed wood Platform wedge  
 107 x 19 inches

*Installation view North, 2019*  
 Mixed media  
 35 x 15 feet







"Copper Leaf in Refuge" 2019  
Oil, acrylic, graphite and paper collage  
on canvas  
82 x 112 inches



"Poppies in Teal Pools # 2" 2019  
Oil and plexiglass  
65 x 80 inches



Detail "Poppies in Teal Pools # 2" 2019  
Oil and plexiglass  
24 x 11 inches

"Poppies in Teal Pools #2" 2019  
Oil, graphite, acrylic on canvas with plexiglass panels  
65 x 80 inches





*Detail, Original sacred leaves, 2019*  
 plexiglass box, framed wood Platform wedge  
 107 x 19 inches

*Installation view North, 2019*  
 Mixed media  
 35 x 15 feet





Detail, "Omnipresence or Chance" 2019  
Oil, graphite on paper  
30 x 20 inches

View from left "Omnipresence or Chance" 2019  
Oil, graphite on paper  
107 x 111 inches







American artist Yvette Gellis lives and works in Los Angeles, California. After attending UCLA and Art Center College of Design in Pasadena CA, she received her M.F.A. in 2008 from Claremont Graduate University. Born and raised in the Chicago area, the vast open terrain in contrast to the urban sprawl sets up structures for painting that echo or reiterate the impermanent and mutable states depicted in her work. Or put another way, her painting is not simply static, an illusion or picture of an event, but allows for participation in the event itself. While ever conscious of historical precedents, she strives to expand upon the boundaries of painting.

Ms. Gellis has exhibited nationally and internationally including: The Pasadena Museum of California Art / The Landesgalerie Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria / CAMAC, St. Jacques Eglise, Dival, France / The Torrance Art Museum, California / Soulangh Cultural Park and Museum, Tainan / The East-Gate Museum, Cao Shan Dong Men Art Museum, Yangmingshan, Taipei, Taiwan / Los Angeles International Airport, LA Department of Cultural Affairs and at The 18th Street Arts Center in Santa Monica.

Galleries include: Jason Vass Gallery, Los Angeles / Brunnhofer Gallery, Austria / Bentley Gallery, Phoenix, Arizona / Nancy Toomey Fine Art, San Francisco / FOCA Fellows of Contemporary Art, LA / Cerritos College Art Gallery, CA and Kim Light LIGHTBOX, Los Angeles, CA.

# LIMINAL SPACES

Born and raised in the Chicago area, the vast open terrain in contrast to the urban sprawl sets up structures for painting that echo or reiterate the impermanent and mutable states depicted in her work. Or put another way, her painting is not simply static, an illusion or picture of an event, but allows for participation in the event itself. While ever conscious of historical precedents, she strives to expand upon the boundaries of painting.

Gellis combines the flatness of abstraction with perspectival figuration in a deliberate effort to confound a sense of space. The site-specificity of her installations, whether indoors or outdoors, challenge traditional ways of viewing painting or experiencing the landscape, or an interior architectural space. Transgressing these traditional boundaries of the medium, Gellis references the effects of these historically defined spaces to provoke the unsettling sense of space with also the insertion of cut fragments, thick paint and collaged elements to rupture the notion that a frame can contain the landscape or an architectural interior experience.

Gellis creates metaphors for imbalance and imminent devastation, thrusting the viewer into an imperiled environment. What results implies a contest between humanity and nature: "There is something beyond the physical world where thoughts transmute into "things" objects, formations in literal space and time."

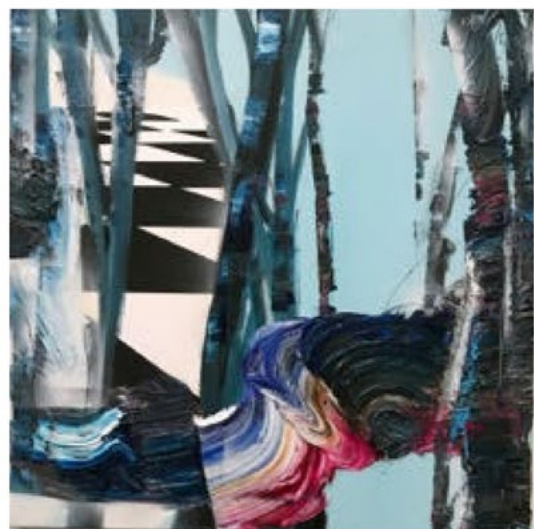
*"Liminal spaces, Light" 2018  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo paper  
112 x 82 inches*





*"Liminal Embrace #2" 2018*  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo paper  
90 x 72 inches





"Mini, Liminal Blue #1" 2018  
Oil, acrylic, Graphite, original photo paper  
18 x 18 inches



"Mini, Liminal Blue #2" 2018  
Oil, acrylic, Graphite, original photo paper  
18 x 18 inches

"Liminal Embrace #3" 2018  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo paper, polyurethane foam, resin  
90 x 72 inches



*"Liminal Embrace, Dark" 2019*  
Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo paper, wood ramp, vinyl print  
112 x 82 inches 2x





*"Breaking Point, Amping House, #2" 2018*  
 Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo  
 60 x 36 inches



*"Breaking Point, Amping House, #1" 2018*  
 Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo  
 60 x 36 inches

*"Aqueous Igneous with Beuys' Violin" 2018*  
 Oil, acrylic, graphite, original photo, resin  
 106 x 168 inches





