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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in May



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Emi Mizukami

Through May 25. King's Leap, 105 Henry Street (Store 5), Manhattan; kingsleapfinearts.com.

Emi Mizukami makes objects, not images, through her paintings. They are alive with texture and all but beg to be touched. Recalling an eclectic mix of artists, with direct reference to [Philip Guston's caricature figures](#), bits of the surrealism of Max Ernst and [Leonora Carrington](#), and the watercolor dream world of [William Blake](#). Each surface — from smooth and waxy to gritty with sand and paste — is a palimpsest paused in a moment between creation and scratching away. They feature dragons, snakes or swans' necks, cartoonlike arms and hands, legs and feet, as well as circles and orbs that are sometimes suns and moons.



Emi Mizukami's "If the Accident Will (The Golden Key)," 2024. via Emi Mizukami and King's Leap, New York; Photo by Sebastian Bach

These are some of the most original paintings I've seen anywhere recently. All the works in the New York debut of this Tokyo artist are paintings on linen, with two exceptions. There are two framed Blakean drawings on overlaid semi-translucent paper, taken from vintage books to create minuscule scenes of depth and elegance. Some works, like "But you have a light" (2023), allow excess linen to protrude from the sides of the paintings like a drapery or skirting. Other works can be removed and turned around, by the gallery attendant, to reveal a companion work on the reverse side. As if — as they hang there — they keep a secret. *JOHN VINCLER*