



NICOLA VASSELL

NA KIM

Blue

OPENING SEPTEMBER 10, 6–8PM
SEPTEMBER 10–OCTOBER 24, 2026

GALLERY HOURS
TUESDAY–SATURDAY, 10 AM–6 PM
138 10TH AVE. NEW YORK, NY 10011

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On View September 10 – October 24, 2026

Nicola Vassell Gallery | 138 10th Ave, New York

“In the works I speak of only the essence is given: the skyness of a sky, the treeness of a tree, the housingness of a house. It serves. It does more. It evokes, elicits, excites. Because of all that has been so artfully omitted, drowned or forgotten, one is left free to roam, free to invent, free to imagine.”

—Henry Miller, *To Paint Is to Love Again*

Nicola Vassell is pleased to present *Blue*, Na Kim’s second solo exhibition with the gallery, which follows *Portraits*, curated by Dodie Kazanjian for Art&Newport. Bringing together a new body of work spanning three distinct series, the exhibition blurs the boundaries between traditional landscape and portraiture.

Throughout the exhibition, painting emerges not simply as a mode of representation, but as an ongoing process of looking, discovering, and becoming. The act of observation—central to Kim’s practice—first led her to capture the elusive, ever-changing nature of the human face. It is through this same perpetual attention, and through the lens of portraiture, that she also approaches landscape, focusing on the mutable form of the cloud.

Though modest in scale and consistent in composition, each painting presents a cloud that commands the picture plane as the singular presence of a sitter does, assuming the rank of a portrait. Behind the central form, loose brushstrokes of green suggest a verdant countryside, while expanses of blue evoke the sea. Just as a single brushstroke in Kim’s portraits can conjure an eye or an ear, here a single mark becomes a house, a tree, or a crescent moon. Within these quietly confident gestures resides the spirit of each painting. They test the indefinite boundary between representation and abstraction, anchoring the composition while escorting the viewer’s gaze and summoning closer attention.

The exhibition’s subsequent galleries draw these cloud portraits into dialogue with Kim’s previous figurative works. In personifying the cloud, the artist imbues it with emotional complexity, injecting personality, temperament, and feeling in addition to form. Each painting proposes a unique set of characteristics and a distinct emotional atmosphere, suggesting the possibility of different psychological states. By contrast, the viewer now considers human faces with a heightened awareness of light, orientation, color, and movement. Ultimately, portrait and landscape become inseparable—each serving as a vehicle through which Kim explores the instability of appearance, the poetics of observation, and painting’s unique capacity to transform the visible into the felt.

NICOLA VASSELL

NA KIM

b.1986 Seoul, South Korea

Na Kim lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Known for her mimetic portraits set against polychromatic backgrounds, Na Kim's paintings depict figures but are conceptually abstract. Her imagined subjects, derivative yet unique, evoke both confrontational and intimate encounters. Kim's practice centers neither accuracy nor narrative, but rather reflects a deeply meditative character study.

Solo exhibitions include *Blue*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York, NY (2026); *Portraits*, Art&Newport, Newport, RI; *Memory Palace*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2025) and Kim's debut solo presentation at White Columns, New York (2023). Group exhibitions include *Outside*, Karma Gallery, Thomaston, ME (2026); *Paint Your Life!*, Leo Koenig, Andes, NY (2026); *Salon*, Lismore Castle, Lismore, Ireland (2026); *Unapologetic*, P21, Seoul, South Korea (2026); *The Selves*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2024); and the White Columns Benefit Auction, New York (2023-2026). Kim has shown work at a number of art fairs, including Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami (2024) and Independent Art Fair, New York (2024). In addition to her fine art practice, Kim currently works as the art editor of *The Paris Review*, and creative director of the publishing house Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Her designs have been named among *The New York Times*' best book covers of the year for the past ten consecutive years.