

Press Release

Uman. A Fantastic Woman

Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Limmatstrasse
23 January – 23 May 2025



For her second exhibition with Hauser & Wirth and her first solo show in Switzerland, Uman presents all new paintings and works on paper at the gallery's Zurich location on Limmatstrasse in partnership with Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York NY. Working in Upstate New York, Uman's new paintings reflect her reverence for the natural world. Fluidly navigating in-between realms to explore both the physical and spiritual, the artist intertwines abstraction, figuration and meditative patterning. Expanding on this unique visual language, Uman's new body of work also explores ideas of color field painting. With some works suspended from the ceiling and a site-specific wall mural that will transform part of the gallery space, Uman invites the viewer to be immersed in her lavishly detailed and opulently colored worlds, replete with gesture, geometry and evocations of the sublime.

About the exhibition

The selection of large-scale works on view in Zurich presents a development in Uman's approach to her painting processes. Looking to artists such as Frank Bowling and his saturated washes of pigment, as well as expanding on the tropes of color field painting, this formal progression begins in Uman's home, where she applies, pours and manipulates paint on unstretched canvases to create a base layer. Uman privileges saturated colors, combining bright jewel tones alongside darker hues in surprising ways. Producing large swathes of color, from pools of purple in 'Purple Painting' (2024) to deep coats of blue, the artist then stretches the material and works on the paintings further in her studio. Uman's process is followed by an application of oil stick or oil paint via intuitive but resolute gestures using a brush or her own hands. Her mastery of pigments makes possible a trajectory between past and present, drawing upon her memories of her East African childhood, rigorous education in traditional Arabic calligraphy, deep engagement with dreams and fascination with kaleidoscopic color and design.

This formal progression aligns with Uman's desire to pursue a painterly exploration of nature, engaging with forms, dots and abstract patterning that resemble mycelial networks. These collide with anthropomorphic elements to culminate in depictions that are at once botanical and intergalactic, with paintings such as

HAUSER & WIRTH



'Green Painting' (2024) suggesting fantastical landscapes. The exhibition also includes three striking paintings of seasons, '4 Seasons #1 (Green)' (2024), '4 Seasons #2 (Blue)' (2024) and '4 Seasons #3 (Red)' (2024), exemplifying the environment as experienced from her rural setting in Albany and leaning into her fascination with color field painting. Uman's focus on the natural and spiritual worlds, as well as an emphasis on one color, aligns with the artist's desire to move beyond traces of self-portraiture in her work, explaining 'I want to push and continue to grow, and that means I have to take myself out of the work. It's something I'm interested in, how much to add or remove myself.'

In contrast to these organic forms, other works depict lattice structures or are executed on gridded paper. Previously evoking the grid system of streets and avenues in New York City, works like 'Swiss Chocolate' (2024) are instead a tribute to the setting of the exhibition in Zurich and the Swiss roots of the gallery. These speak to the gridded wall mural in the gallery, an ambitious intervention that houses 16 works on paper. Further works on paper included two double-sided drawings that hang from the gallery's tall ceiling, offering viewers access to both sides of the artwork. Presenting the full extent of her capabilities, these at once depict biomorphic and geometric shapes. By traversing both natural and spiritual worlds, Uman's paintings ultimately engage with universal desires. As the artist explains, 'everyone wants to be loved, everyone wants to be happy, everyone wants to live in a safe planet and feel like they have a future.'

Uman will be the artist in residence at Hauser & Wirth Somerset in May 2025. In October 2025, Uman's first US solo museum exhibition will open at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum CT, curated by Amy Smith-Stewart.

About the artist

Uman was born in Somalia in 1980. She moved with her family to Kenya in 1989 as a result of the Somali Civil War, before relocating to Denmark at the age of 13. From an early age, Uman loved to draw and was fascinated by color and illustration. In the 2000s, when in her 20s, Uman moved to New York City. There, she met Swiss-born, Manhattan-based psychiatrist Annatina Miescher, who encouraged the artist's intuitive approach to painting and served as a mentor.

In 2015, Uman's first solo exhibition opened at White Columns, attracting significant attention for her paintings, sculptures and assemblage works that dazzled with their unorthodox and wholly original approach to layering cross-cultural, art historical and textile-based references. As poet and critic Ilka Scobie explained, '[Uman] embodies a fluidity that transcends borders, genders, abstraction, and figuration.'

HAUSER & WIRTH



Uman has been working in Roseboom and Albany in Upstate New York since 2010, places that together form the center of her life and work. The artist's work synthesizes the various cultures in which she has lived, with her experiences finding their way into recurring motifs: animals of the East African desert, patterns evoking Somalian hand-woven fabrics, Nordic environments from her time in Denmark, the urban landscape of Manhattan, the starry skies in upstate New York. The natural world continues to directly inform her art through the physical and psychological shifts of the landscape, contributing to her fictional topographies.

Uman has had solo exhibitions at Nicola Vassell, New York NY; Eleni Koroneou Gallery, Athens, Greece; Fierman, New York NY; Anne De Villepoix, Paris, France; and White Columns, New York NY. She has been featured in group exhibitions at the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada; For-Site Foundation at Fort Mason Chapel, San Francisco CA; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England; Karma, New York NY; and Ramiken Crucible, New York NY. In 2022, she was the recipient of the inaugural grant for The Cube at TRIADIC's FORMAT Festival in Bentonville AR.

For additional information, please contact:

Maddy Martin, Hauser & Wirth, maddymartin@hauserwirth.com +44 7585 979564 (Europe)

Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Limmatstrasse

Limmatstrasse 270
8005 Zürich

Opening hours:

Tue – Fri, 11 am – 6pm
Sat, 11 am – 5 pm

Caption and courtesy information:

Uman
Purple Painting
2024
Acrylic, oil, and oil stick on canvas
243.8 x 243.8 cm / 96 x 96 in
© Uman
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Nicola Vassell
Gallery
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Uman
Swiss Chocolate #1
2024
Acrylic, oil, oil stick, and enamel on canvas
243.8 x 182.9 cm / 96 x 72 in
© Uman
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Nicola Vassell
Gallery
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Uman
4 Seasons #1 (Green)
2024
Acrylic, oil, and oil stick on canvas
213.4 x 213.4 cm / 84 x 84 in
© Uman
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Nicola Vassell
Gallery
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Uman
Manuela #2
2024
Acrylic, oil, and oil stick on canvas
213.4 x 213.4 cm / 84 x 84 in
© Uman
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Nicola Vassell
Gallery
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Uman
Mirror, Mirror on ur wall
2024
Acrylic, oil, oil stick, and mirrors on canvas
243.8 x 243.8 cm / 96 x 96 in
© Uman
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Nicola Vassell
Gallery
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer