

KRISTEN VALLE YANN



DUST TO DUST

For there is something in our spirit that longs for more.

MAY 27 - JUNE 24

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, 1:4-5, 3:20

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter
under heaven:
a time to be born,
and a time to die;
a time to plant,
and a time to harvest;
a time to kill,
and a time to heal;
a time to break down,
and a time to build up;
a time to weep,
and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn,
and a time to dance...

Generations come
and generations go,
there is nothing new under the sun.

...all come from dust,
and to dust all return.



Pomegranates with Weed Vine, Oil on panel, 8 x 10 inches

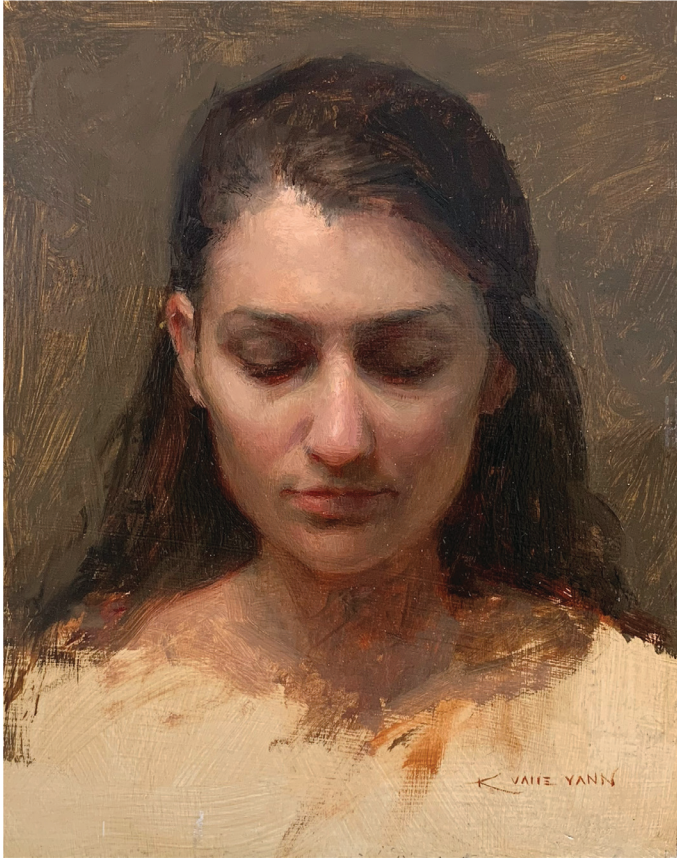
Forward

The fleeting nature of our time on earth, the search for meaning in life, and the disillusionment of death are subjects artists, poets, and philosophers have been pondering for as long as humans have had breath. Painters past — especially 15th-century European painters and 17th-century Dutch still life painters — dedicated entire genres to it, called *memento mori* and *vanitas* respectively, which symbolically reminded viewers of their mortality. King Solomon authored the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes more than 3,000 years ago and posed some of the most enduring questions on the matter, providing a powerful antidote to the futility of life, ages before poets such as Whitman, Longfellow, or Thoreau penned their own existential ruminations.

The young contemporary realist painter and curious observer Kristen Valle Yann (b. 1997) has turned her attention to this topic as well in her current solo exhibition titled *Dust to Dust*, inspired by the book of Ecclesiastes. In the stillness of these mostly figurative and portrait paintings (along with a few still lifes) gentle whispers of peace and

quiet touch the viewers' senses and invite them to take a moment to pause and reflect. "My world is one of quiet recollections," the artist shares about this body of work. "Here are the modest commonplaces of window-lit rooms and unfolded linens sprawled out an empty bed. There is a beauty in stillness. It's in this very space that I am stirred to the awareness of time passing. The sounds of a clock fill an empty room: I remember that nothing lasts forever and all these souvenirs, along with myself, will one day pass away."

Yann grew up in a rural Florida town, where she developed an early appreciation for nature and a keen attention to detail. "As the daughter of a Cuban immigrant, I was raised to be thankful for the little things we easily take for granted," she explains. "Often gratitude rises to awareness in moments of stillness. For me, painting creates that space. It invites me to be still, look intently, and take in the colors, shapes, and beauty before me." In 2018 she earned a B.F.A. from Florida State University but, feeling that it did not provide her with adequate training, she decided shortly after graduation to



Self portrait in Oil, Oil on panel, 10 x 8 inches

spend a year as a resident artist at East Oaks Studio in North Carolina, painting alongside artists such as Louis Carr and Alex Venezia.

Perfecting her technique and developing her own style took further years of practice and self-education. Although she is young and still growing as an artist, her natural technical abilities and her gift for translating emotional content are already abundantly apparent. Take *Generations* for instance, where a young mother is sitting in a quiet corner holding her child by the window. The hands and feet alone in this painting are works of art, and the handling of the Rubenesque skin tones is also remarkable. Or in portraits such as *Heirloom* and *Entering In*, where the choice of position and pose speak of the artist's instinct for design and composition. Yann has clearly found a palette that suits her ethereal depictions as well, which appears to be limited and in the family of mostly umbers, ivories, blush pinks, beige-greens, and whites — the kind of colors that conjure some lovely memory one might hold in his or her heart, such as lace curtains slowly blowing in the breeze of a grandmother's house during the Golden Hour of evening.

Discussing the subtle memento mori symbolism in the pieces throughout this exhibition, the artist states: "Each piece aims



to touch on themes from the book of Ecclesiastes. In this Biblical text, we are introduced to a teacher who begs the question: why? If all must pass away, what is the meaning of it all? My intended role as artist is not to answer this question primarily but, rather, to take the culmination of my personal experiences and meditate on this inquiry visually. While I personally have agreed with the teacher on the conclusion of the matter, my work remains in the space in between. Symbols of time passing and the inevitability of death find their forms through pomegranates and blackberries to portraits of sisters and self.”

“In the end, my overall aim in creating this body of work is to invite viewers into the stillness of my world, sensations of the past and present, in order to recognize the future,” Yann concludes. “We are dust, and to dust we shall return.”

Allison Malafronte
Writer/Editor

Generations, Oil on panel, 30 x 24 inches



Among the Blackberries, Oil on panel, 9 x 19 inches

Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. —Psalm 90:12

At Rest
Oil on panel
12 x 16 inches



Heirloom
Oil on panel
15 x 17 inches



Entering In
Oil on panel
20 x16 inches



Linens
Oil on panel
24 x 18 inches



Vapor
Oil on panel
18 x 6 inches



“Remember that you have only one soul; that you have only one death to die; that you have only one life, which is short and has to be lived by you alone; and there is only one Glory, which is eternal. If you do this, there will be many things about which you care nothing.”

— St. Teresa of Avila

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The Paintings of
Kristen Valle Yann
DUST TO DUST

—— May 27 - June 24 ——

Opening Reception: May 27, 5 - 7 pm

Online catalogue available
Saturday, May 27 at 3:00 pm EST

www.collinsgalleries.com

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Cover: *Sojourner*, Oil on panel, 18 x 24 inches