

Ali Eyal

*Imagine, all this happened just an hour ago*

December 11, 2025 — January 21, 2026



François Ghebaly is proud to present *Imagine, all this happened just an hour ago*, Ali Eyal's debut exhibition with the gallery.

Ali Eyal is an Iraqi artist working across painting, drawing, assemblage, and film to examine how personal memory tangles with political violence and loss. Born in Baghdad in 1994, Eyal orients much of his practice around vanished places: the unelectrified dark of a childhood bedroom in the city; an uncle's farm south of Baghdad; and other familial spaces now destroyed and existing only in the artist's imagination to which he returns again and again through the circuitous routes of memory and reinterpretation. His images unfold in a cartoonish, sometimes grotesque idiom that sidesteps realism. Instead, Eyal finds in exaggeration and distortion a sharper instrument for rendering what he calls "the after war." This refers to the lingering psychological wake of conflict, and the way state violence continues to reverberate through survivors and diasporic communities long after wars end. Eyal's canvases teem with color and incident, their dense, heady compositions animated by an internal logic that refuses easy legibility. In this refusal, Eyal's own imagination becomes a way of insisting on stories that have been suppressed or forgotten.

In *Imagine, this happened just an hour ago*, Eyal presents a group of oil paintings and framed drawings that interpolate childhood memories, recurring characters, familial mythology, and insinuations of exile, surveillance, and disappearance. The exhibition's title suggests the temporal collapse that is characteristic of traumatic memory, where past events persist with startling immediacy in the present. Throughout the works, individual figures' thoughts are often depicted through vignettes or literal doorways carved into their heads, or else bleeding into the present moment with hallucinatory clarity. The paintings careen between perspectives and timelines in a visual logic that recalls aspects of stream-of-consciousness, magic realism, and elegy. In the work *Could you please paint this?* (2025), Eyal merges a memory of his mother showing him the brilliant blue-green spores on a moldy orange with visions of armed soldiers searching his bedroom. A painter's palette

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and brush in hand positioned at the lower edge of the image remind viewers that the composite scene, though comprised of true events, is equally an invention of the mind's eye. This porosity between interior/exterior and real/imagined underscores the psychological terrain Eyal navigates. His drawings, meanwhile, unfold across a number of different surfaces: washi paper, wooden veneer sheets, cardboard, hastily torn leaves from sketchpads and other ephemera. This array of materials, some precious, some disposable, adds to the itinerant, peregrine quality of the work, and suggests images recalled mid-flight or salvaged from remainders.

At the center of the gallery stands Eyal's sculpture *Where do the walls of the museum go when they are forgotten? And* (2021-2025). The work consists of a weathered dark green jacket, perhaps military-issue, suspended on a wooden stand with its front splayed open to reveal an interior lined with ceramic caterpillars and drawings sewn onto scraps of fabric. A lamp positioned on the floor illuminates the interior from below, casting the jacket in a light that is at once forensic and devotional. The caterpillars, metamorphic creatures that feed on both the material of the jacket as well as the images contained therein, echo Eyal's wider interest in processes of reimagination. Here as in the rest of the exhibition, memory reveals itself as neither totally fixed nor fluid, but instead gradually transformed by the act of recollection.

Ali Eyal (b. 1994, Baghdad, Iraq) lives and works in Los Angeles. He earned an undergraduate degree from the Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad. Recent solo exhibitions include *Brief Histories*, New York; and *SAW Gallery*, Ottawa. Group exhibitions include the 14th Mercosul Biennial in Porto Allegre, Brazil; Québec City Biennial, Canada; 15th Sharjah Biennale, UAE; 58th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh; Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; Documenta 15, Kassel; MoMA PS1, New York; and Beirut Art Center, Beirut. Eyal's video work is included in the 22nd Biennial Sesc\_Videobrasil, São Paulo; Rencontres Internationales, Paris; VITRINE x Kino Screenings, London; Sharjah Film Platform, UAE; and Cairo Video Festival, Egypt. His work is held in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris; and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

Eyal's work is currently featured in *Made in L.A. 2025* at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, *Let Them Say Something* at ChertLüdde in Berlin, and *Fictions of Display* at MOCA Los Angeles.