

# JACK HANLEY GALLERY

Nikki Maloof

*Caught and Free*

21 March - 20 April, 2019  
Opening reception  
Thursday, March 21, 6-8pm

Jack Hanley Gallery is excited to present *Caught and Free*, Nikki Maloof's second solo exhibition with the gallery. In her new paintings, Maloof continues to develop environments inhabited by animals while transforming their natural surroundings into fully domesticated settings: a cat lying on an armchair, canaries looking through the bars of their prettily ornamented cages and fish lying on a kitchen table, about to be cooked and eaten for dinner.

Cartoon-like, Maloof's goofy looking animals seem to be unaware of their situations, appearing humorous while equally evoking sympathy. A psychological tension is palpable throughout her works. While gay color palettes and playful domestic patterns on fabrics, carpets, curtains and kitchen tiles allude to happy homes, the headlines of discarded newspapers indicate otherwise: "Night Anxiety at All Time High", "Cry whenever you want to", "How did we get here and where are we going from now on?". At first inviting in their joviality, the domestic patterns seem to embellish internal captivities of stagnation, quotidian routine and ennui.

The pervading analogy of animals and humans is also manifested in a play of perspectives. In 'Canaries' the viewer is caught in the cage together with three little birds, looking out into the world through bars where pigeons take a stroll on a window sill, flying freely. In Maloof's adoption of a traditional painting language, vanitas symbols like dying flowers, peeled lemons and fresh cut fish bring to mind existential themes of ephemerality and the limitations of life. Maloof transfers this heavily loaded symbolism into our times, unloading its seriousness through the use of a unique comical narrative and painting style. Funny and serious, inward and outward, caught and free, Nikki Maloof's elaborate compositions resemble human existence and the complexities of life itself.

*Nikki Maloof, (b. 1985, Peoria, IL) lives and works in Western Massachusetts. She had solo exhibitions at Jack Hanley Gallery, Shane Campbell Gallery (Chicago) and The Pit (Los Angeles). Numerous group exhibitions include the 2018 Invitational Exhibitions of Visual Arts at The Academy of Arts and Letters (New York), Cheeky: Summer Butts at Marinaro Gallery (New York), Horror Vacui, or The Annihilation of Space, Misako and Rosen (Tokyo), Imagine at Brand New Gallery (Milan), Tiger Tiger at Salon 94 (New York) and Do The Yale Thing at the N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art in Detroit.*

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