



For Immediate Release:

Alexa Guariglia: *Act Natural*

May 1 – June 14, 2025

Artist's Reception: Thursday, May 1, 6-8 PM

Yossi Milo is pleased to announce Alexa Guariglia's debut solo exhibition with the gallery, *Act Natural*, which opens to the public on Thursday, May 1, and will be on view through Saturday, June 14, 2025.

Alexa Guariglia (b. 1990; New York, NY) deploys watercolor, gouache, and ink on the surfaces of her works on paper, sensationalizing daily life in gestural forms and precise zones of pattern. Observing her surroundings with an earnest, anthropological eye, Guariglia animates fragments of memory into compositions of urban and collective space. The artist pursues this in small-scale, individual portraits and vast scenes with grouped ensembles of figures, all of which are grounded as deeply in optimism, style, and humor as in embellishment and sheer detail in pursuit of the sublime.

In Guariglia's practice, pattern is essential, taking center stage as both a universal method of adornment and a metaphor for the organizing principles that create beauty within a chaotic world. Patterns seen in nature, both visual and behavioral, arise from unconscious repetition and variation. For Guariglia, to *Act Natural* is to follow and study these, and to be guided by a social cue as intuitively as her paintings follow her hand. This approach to rendering is informed by the principles of calligraphic mark-making and the artist's own experience painting signs and murals in her youth. Reconfiguring the simple, yet infinitely variable practice of lettering, Guariglia makes use of the same curves, diagonals, and straights that make up the symbols of language. In this way, painting becomes a coded form of communication, a method by which the artist articulates human truths with economy of line. Improvised in dancery brushstrokes across each subtly irregular piece of paper, Guariglia drafts wordless poems on life in the city.

As a product of self-awareness, Guariglia takes particular note of the behavior of others: schedules, divisions, routines, rewards. Through her work, the artist recognizes these as the substance of social life and the scaffolds of sentimentality. Checkers, zigzags, houndstooth, and dots act as product and metaphor, exemplifying the tender pull of the day-to-day while being derived directly from it. Each of Guariglia's tessellations is born from her own capacity for pattern-recognition, drawn from a deep mental library — of

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vintage prints, decorated rooms, and places past — that are richly interpolated into the artist's imagined spaces and characters.

This process comes full-circle in Guariglia's extravagant large-scale works, where depth and volume arise from the impact of countless microcosms within broad and graceful shapes. In these scenes, the artist's figures display parallel actions and patterns of behavior that underpin and echo the designs that unite them. "Limelight" (2024) is a scene within scene, wherein a film set depicting New York is lit and shot by a foreground of studio workers in Los Angeles. Their concentric arrangement creates a world within a world: one where figures *act*, and another where they *act natural*. Two figures at the front frame the action, arabesque in conversation; the middle ground shows the set crew, each smartly dressed in swirls, damasks, and bows. A black-and-white beam signals the camera's view through a deft switch into ink wash, and just to its right appears a tiny figure polishing up the familiar Nathan's sign. As in many of Guariglia's immersively-sized paintings, the periphery is a harmonious clash of print and color.

Visual principles of embellishment and contrast lead Guariglia's dramatizations of public space, where she finds miniature universes within shared places: libraries, department stores, post offices, theaters, salons, and parks, to name only a few. The individual elements of each painting are created through a constancy of change, and gouache and watercolor bump elbows with pencil and ink in creating dimension. In engaging deeply with paper and varying her approach, Guariglia finds a union of drawing and painting that is bound to paper's permanence and freed by its immediacy. This dichotomy creates her work's tactile appeal: the surface of each painting recalls Medieval illuminated manuscripts as readily as exotic textiles through its vibrant tones and highly ornamented charm. In her studio, the artist zooms into granular ideas and narrative details to reveal the lyricism within the overlooked. In *Act Natural*, Guariglia finds a balance between looking backwards into memory and forwards to possibility, using the ordinary as a site of inquiry into the unknown. Immersed in the dazzle of Guariglia's work, her viewers — much like her subjects — are natural beings who take in their unnatural environments with open curiosity, always seeking a hint of what might come next.

Act Natural is Alexa Guariglia's first show in New York since 2020. Guariglia has presented solo exhibitions at Moskowitz Bayse, Los Angeles, CA; Gallery 263, Cambridge, MA; and World's Fair Gallery, Providence, RI. Works by Guariglia have been included in group exhibitions at Galeria Mayoral, Paris, France; Fourth Wall, Boston, MA; Kevin Porter, Boston, MA, among many others. Her work is held in the permanent collection of the Rose Art Museum, Waltham, WA. The artist studied painting at The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA. Guariglia lives and works in Providence, RI.

For more information, please contact Jack Cassou at 212.414.0370 or jack@yossimilo.com, or visit the gallery's website at www.yossimilo.com.

Image: Alexa Guariglia, *Limelight*, 2024, Gouache, Watercolor, and Ink on Paper, Framed: 63 11/16" x 93 5/16" (162 cm x 237 cm)