

ARTNET NEWS

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HERE ARE 10 OF THE BEST ARTWORKS WE SAW AROUND THE WORLD IN 2022 “ULALA IMAI: THE SCENE”

by Annie Armstrong



Ulala Imai, *Strangers* (2021). Image courtesy the artist and Karma Gallery.

Considering how often I stopped by, the team over at Karma must have thought I had set up a tent outside of their East Village gallery through the run of Ulala Imai’s solo show “The Scene.” Imai’s brushy, humor-filled still-lives feel lighthearted, melancholic, and wistful all at once—the toys she arranges anthropomorphically both delight and pull at the child within you. Teddy bears in patterned robes stand triumphantly with a Chewbacca toy in a field of flowers, suggesting that perhaps the trio had just completed a laborious quest. A series of paintings titled *Lovers* show Charlie Brown and Lucy in various phases of young romance. Elsewhere, Snoopy reclines under an umbrella of pink and green leaves in his lifeguard’s uniform.

My favorite painting on view was of a vision of moonlight through tall pine trees, presumably painted from the perspective of one of the teddy bears she poses on the forest floor. The moonlight she paints captures the pall of a romanticized childhood, gazed upon by a proxy for childlike innocence.