

# A.I.R.

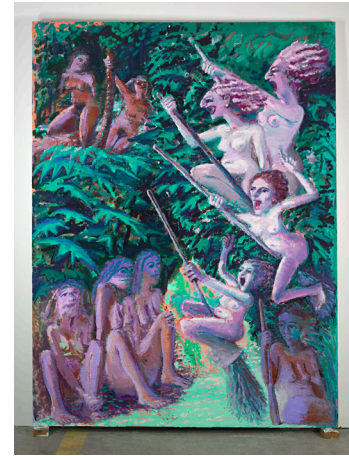
## *I Put A Spell* Tirtzah Bassel

January 10 - February 8, 2026

Opening reception: Saturday, January 10 from 6-8pm

GALLERY I

A.I.R. Gallery presents *I Put a Spell*, an exhibition of new work by Brooklyn-based painter Tirtzah Bassel. Bassel's paintings explore the figure of the witch and its persistence throughout Western culture and art history, referencing both the Old Masters of the European canon and reclamations by women artists including Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, and Mary Beth Edelson. Bassel's investigations, however, center on the persistence of gesture and artifact, retraced interfaces with a pre-Christian, pre-Enlightenment relation to the mystical and the magical. The body and its sensual capacities occupy Bassel's reinterpretations of mythological and art historical imagery—what might it feel like to careen through the air with abandon, sweeping the air clean in one's wake? Through movement, affect, and speculative research, Bassel chases the visual and kinetic remnants of the witch in our own embodied everyday.



Tirtzah Bassel, *Four Sweepers of the Apocalypse*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches. Photo credit: Barry Rosenthal, courtesy of SLAG&RX.

For Bassel, the practice of painting is akin to that of spellmaking. Brush, knife, and the artist's hand conspire to extract limbs and foliage from thick accumulations of paint and frothy washes of pigment. In *Four Sweepers of the Apocalypse* (2025), four nude figures astride broomsticks careen through a leafy backdrop, wild hair streaming behind and mouths open in a gleeful cackle. They burst across—and out from—the canvas with rowdy abandon, their movements unconstrained by the strictures of propriety and gender. Rather than fixate on the physical traits assigned to witches, however, other works in *I Cast a Spell* glean witchiness from material culture, bodily experience, and sacred ritual. The setting and title of *Four Who Entered the Orchard* (2025) refer to Hebrew legend, in which the orchard represents esoteric wisdom. Its occupants however, depart from the Rabbis of the Talmudic tradition. A figure on all fours (a reference to Portuguese artist Paula Rego's 1994 painting *Dog Woman*) scrabbles in the shade of a pomegranate tree; another tumbles, legs flailing, from a mass of leaves. Here, Bassel prods at the circumscriptions of propriety and stewardship of knowledge, revealing the shakiness of the distinctions between priest and witch, occult spell and religious rite, sacred knowledge and profane art. The rightmost figure dips a hand in a jar of water, as if testing the sensation, intuiting knowledge from tactile experience. Elsewhere, the intimate scale of gestural studies offer focused explorations of a single movement: sweeping, drawing a circle, binding a strap. Through its actions and extensions, the body becomes a bridge between ancient narrative and contemporary experience. Throughout the exhibition, magic represents a way of engaging the more-than-human world: a means

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of communing with what lies at the edges of knowing. At the same time, Bassel's transtemporal and transcultural manipulations of narrative, archetype, and motif situate magic within the recesses of human imagination and corporeality. Each work becomes a threshold, inviting viewers to step toward the edges of the unseen. If Bassel's *Four Sweepers* replace the Four Horseman of the Biblical apocalypse, what kind of revelations are they ushering in? What future lies in their wake?

This exhibition is part of the **Peleh Family Residency**, a program of The Neighborhood: An Urban Center for Jewish Life supported by The Peleh Fund. The Neighborhood gathers people together for inventive and unexpected Jewish arts, culture, and spirituality, bringing together Brooklyn energy with Jewish experience to spark meaning and joy. The Peleh Family Residency is based in Berkeley, CA and Brooklyn, NY, and seeks to help artists of all disciplines strengthen their practice by offering them time, space, and support. Designed to accommodate artists with families, the residency provides a space for retreat, reflection, and art-making, and an opportunity to foster new collaborations, audiences, and connections. The Peleh Family Residency was founded in honor of Ruth Silverman, whose spirit guides this endeavor. [www.theneighborhoodbk.org](http://www.theneighborhoodbk.org)

**Tirtzah Bassel** (b. 1979) is a Brooklyn-based visual artist whose figurative paintings and site-responsive installations examine the presumed neutrality of everyday spaces, from airports to supermarkets. Her ongoing series *Canon in Drag* reimagines iconic artworks by subverting canonical authority through gender-flipped and altered narratives.

Bassel's work has been featured in exhibitions at institutions including the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago (2026 forthcoming); SLAG&RX, Paris and New York (2024, 2022); Galerie Thomas Fuchs, Stuttgart (2018); Ortega y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn (2018); and BRIC Arts Media Center, Brooklyn (2016). Recent projects include Platform in partnership with David Zwirner Gallery (2022), Natasha Arselan Gallery, London (2022), and Martha's Contemporary, Austin (2022). Her work has also appeared in group exhibitions at 601Artspace, New York (2023) and FOR-SITE Foundation, San Francisco (2018).

Bassel's practice has been covered in *ARTNews*, *Frieze*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *BBC Radio 4*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Art Newspaper*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*, among others. She holds an MFA from Boston University, and is represented by SLAG&RX, New York, and Galerie Thomas Fuchs, Stuttgart. [www.tirtzahbassel.com](http://www.tirtzahbassel.com)

A.I.R. Gallery is wheelchair accessible via ramp. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating with backs. Free tap water is available. The venue is nearest to the F train at York St (0.2 miles) and the A, C trains at High St (0.5 miles). The nearest wheelchair accessible trains are the 2, 3 at Borough Hall (0.8 miles) and the B, Q, R at Dekalb Av (1.1 miles). The roads immediately surrounding the gallery are cobblestone. The nearest accessible parking garage (for an hourly fee) is two blocks away at 100 Jay St. No fee or ID necessary for entry. Please contact [info@airgallery.org](mailto:info@airgallery.org) for more information or to request additional accommodations.

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