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THE WEEK IN ABSTRACT ART - SPIRITS IN THE MATERIAL WORLD



Featured image: Manika Nagare - A Body in Two 2, 2016, oil on canvas

Manika Nagare: Wraparound

By PHILLIP BARCIO
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This is the time of year when many cultures celebrate the harvest and prepare for the onset of winter. Across the globe, people will don costumes and engage in festivities intended to embrace the transitory essence of nature. One of the most well-known harvest celebrations is Halloween, which originated in Ireland and marks the beginning of the three-day feast of Allhallowtide, when Western Christians remember the spirits of the their beloved departed. Members of the Mexican culture celebrate *Día de Muertos*, a chance to pray for deceased family members and friends to help them on their spiritual journeys. In parts of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, children carve Beet Spirits and Turnip Ghosts, taking to the streets with these hilariously frightening specters, asking for gifts to mark *Rübengeistern*. And in Northeast Germany, many folks celebrate *Martinisingen*, traveling from house to house with lanterns singing in remembrance not of the dead but of the time when laid off seasonal farm workers would request food donations from neighbors to sustain them through winter. Each of these customs in its own way acknowledges and pays homage to the sometimes-thin line separating the living world and the world beyond. To mark this magical, mystical, ephemeral time of year, here are five current abstract art exhibitions that each somehow examine nature, life, death, and the search to connect with the eternal.

The Tokyo-based abstract artist Manika Nagare paints large and luminous canvases filled with biomorphic compositions and the vibrant colors of nature. Inspired by the lingering aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, these paintings are intended as reminders that humanity is not separate from nature, but coexists with it, and, as Nagare says, “*hold responsibility for its future.*”