Pi ARTWORKS LONDON

ELINA YUMASHEVA
An Enquiry into Colour and Matter

13–28 November 2026 | Pi Artworks London

Painting at the intersection of colour, material experimentation and environmental science.



*Pi Artworks presents An Enquiry into Colour and Matter, the **first solo exhibition by Elina Yumasheva (b. 1988),** whose paintings bring traditional techniques into dialogue with environmental science and experimental materials, including pigments extracted from laboratory-cultivated bacteria. A recent graduate of the Royal College of Art and recipient of the Basil H. Alkazzi Scholarship Award, Yumasheva investigates how colour, form and matter emerge through their interactions.*

Environmental responsibility is embedded in Yumasheva's working methods rather than treated as a subject for representation. Drawing on her background in environmental science, she combines historical techniques of preparing grounds, sizing canvases and layering pigments with research into alternative materials and non-toxic processes.

Informed by posthuman theories and new materialism, her paintings explore a world in which forms and identities are shaped through relationships rather than existing as fixed, independent entities. Through successive layers of pigment, Yumasheva builds and partially removes colour, allowing traces of earlier layers to remain visible. Amorphous forms emerge and recede within luminous fields, while colour relationships shift through accumulation, concealment and contact.

The exhibition brings together two interconnected strands of painting. In one, unresolved forms occupy the centre of the canvas, hovering between presence and disappearance. In the other, fragments and individual colour relationships are isolated and examined through changes in scale and composition. Each work becomes an experiment in perception, exploring how the relationship between pigment, surface and surrounding colour influences what we see.

Yumasheva's material research includes cultivating Janthinobacterium lividum in a biolab to extract pigment for use in oil paintings. Once prepared, the pigment introduces dark, granular particles into the painted surface. The organism is neutralised during preparation and is no longer living in the finished work. This process brings materials of biological origin into dialogue with established painting traditions, extending her enquiry into the relationship between living and non-living matter.

Drawing on Karen Barad's concept of intra-action, Anna Tsing's writing on encounter and Josef Albers's investigations into the perception of colour, Yumasheva approaches painting as a space for sustained experimentation rather than illustration. Her works invite viewers to consider how meaning, identity and material properties are continually shaped through interaction.

Bringing together paintings that shift between emergence and dissolution, An Enquiry into Colour and Matter invites viewers to look closely at how colour behaves, how forms take shape and how the materials of painting influence what we see.

About the Artist

Elina Yumasheva (b. 1988) graduated from the Royal College of Art with an MA in Painting in 2026, supported by the Basil H. Alkazzi Scholarship Award. She also holds an MA in Contemporary Art Practice from the RCA (2024) and an MSc in Environmental Science from the University of Edinburgh (2011).

She co-led SustainLab RCA, having previously served as its Head in 2023–24. She was a finalist for the Jaguar x RCA Award 2026 and the Hyundai Award for Excellence in Sustainability & Creative Practice 2026. Her work has featured in group presentations at Tate Modern Lates and Saatchi Gallery.

About Pi Artworks

Established in 1998, Pi Artworks is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Istanbul, championing artistic experimentation and independent practices across generations and disciplines. With a longstanding commitment to emerging and under-recognised artists, the gallery encourages material exploration, new approaches and artistic development throughout their careers.

Exhibition and Press Information

Elina Yumasheva — An Enquiry into Colour and Matter
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Thursday 12 November
Private Collectors' Dinner (by invitation)

Friday 13 November, 4–5 pm
Joint Press Tour — Pi Artworks × SLQS Gallery

The press tour is organised jointly with neighbouring SLQS Gallery, presenting Our Own Device, a solo exhibition by Kate Williams exploring illusion, constructed environments and the relationship between physical and imagined worlds.

Friday 13 November, 6–8 pm
Exhibition Opening and Private View

Saturday 28 November
3 pm — Artist Talk
4 pm — Closing Party

Pi Artworks London
Unit 6, Perseverance Works
Entrance via 25–27 Hackney Road
London E2 7NX

Tuesday–Saturday, 12–6 pm
www.piartworks.com

Press enquiries: jade@piartworks.com

Press image: Elina Yumasheva, The Study of Matter 6, 2026. Oil and bacteria pigment on canvas, 200 × 167 cm. Courtesy of the artist.