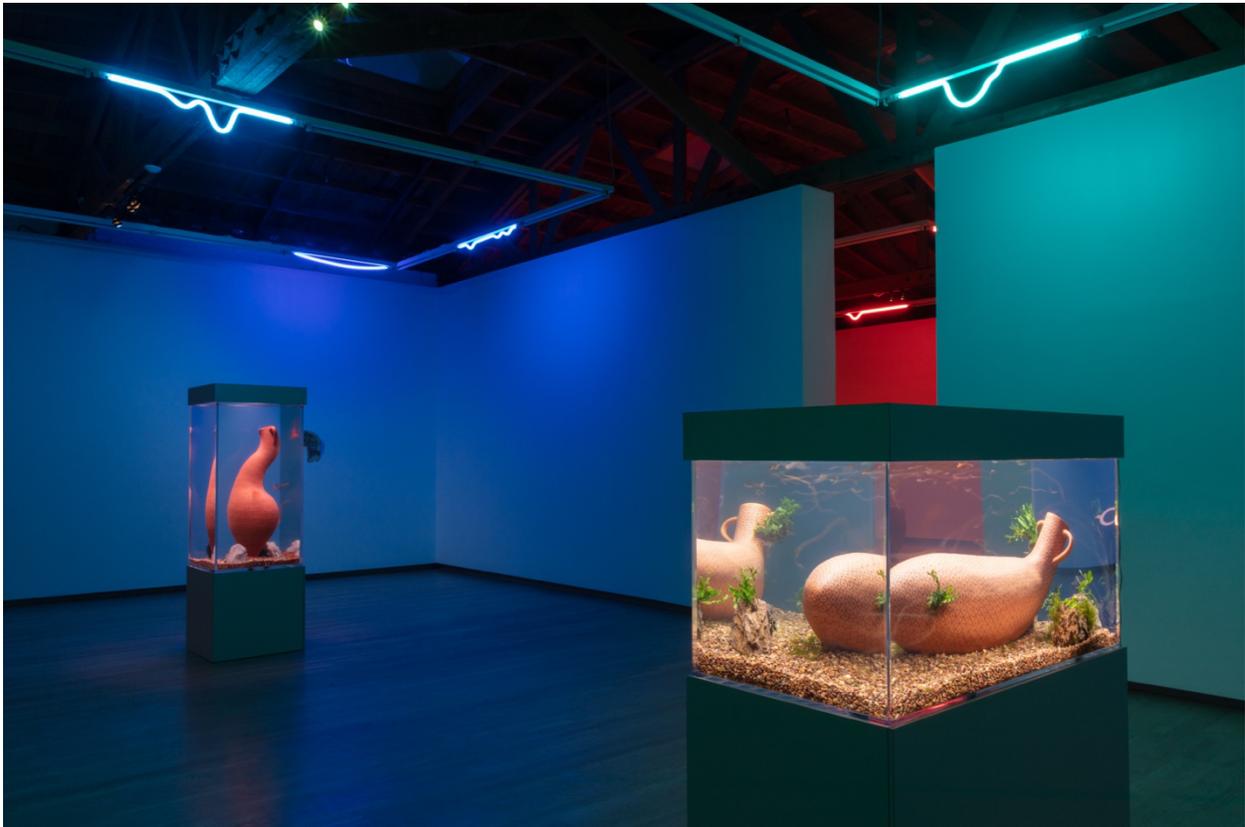


## Cammie Staros and Michael Stamm at Shulamit Nazarian

**Written by Sydney Walters, March 16, 2021**

Cammie Staros's *What Will Have Being* is an immersive experience that plunges into the depths of the ocean and emerges with a unique perspective of time and transition.

In the entry hall of the gallery, Staros situates three ceramic vessels in various states of presentation. One is held on a stand rising from a protective vitrine. The second is completely enveloped in a case as one would expect a cherished object to be stationed in a museum. The third is on a stand, sans protection like household sculpture. Though shaped like Greco-Roman urns, Staros cuts, splits, and twists these presented vessels. In their slightly unraveled state, they resemble a harp shell. This shape is actualized in the shells coating the bottom of the aquatic tank built into the gallery's movable wall.

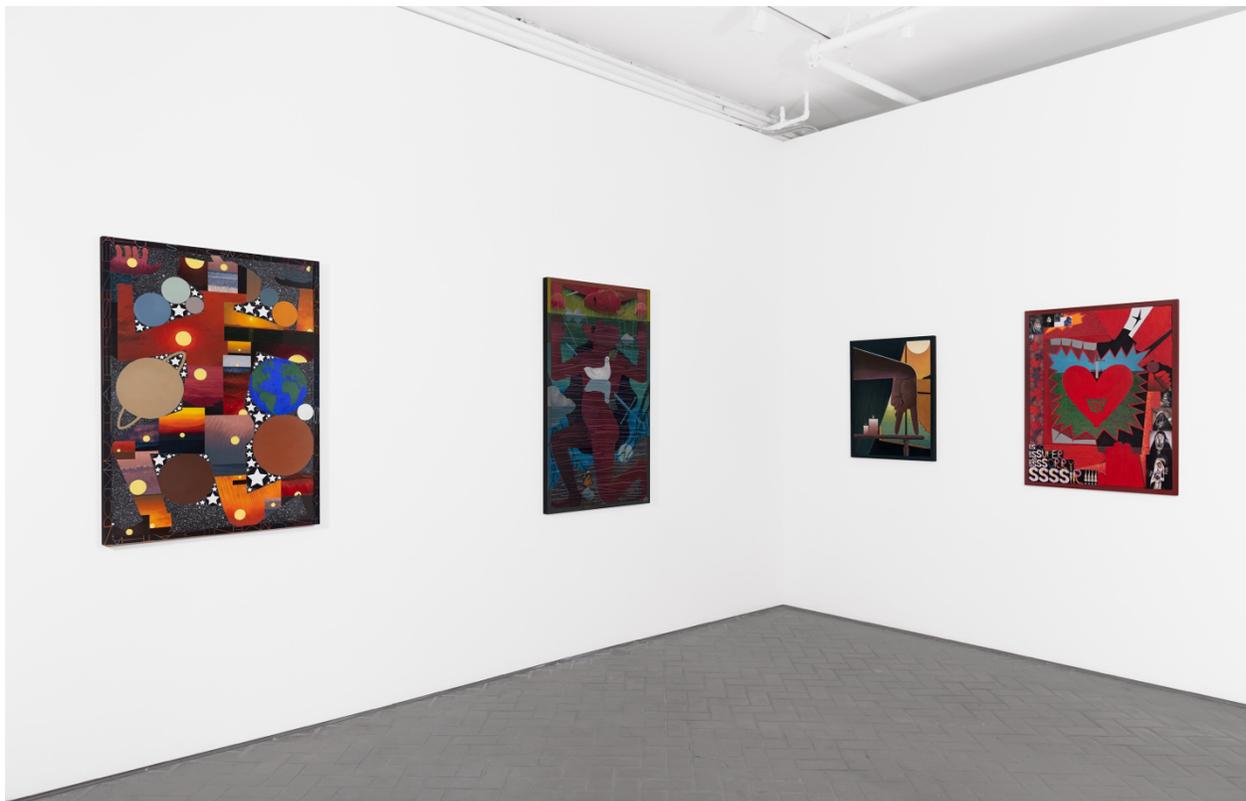


*What Will Have Being*, installation view, Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, January 16–March 6, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian. Photo: Morgan Waltz.

In fact, Staros has fabricated three aquatic tanks of varying shapes. They are self-illuminated, gesturing towards the Grecian artifact display cases at the Met and British Museum. The first aquarium is crystal clear. The second and tallest tank is also quite clear but there is definitive murkiness in the third, as though the tanks are progressing in age. Fish swim in and around the sculptures and vegetation in the tanks. Blue and green fluorescent lights illuminating the space add to the feeling of submersion. The wobbly fluorescent tubes and puddles of colored glass on the floor add to the illusion that the space is rapidly eroding.

The second tank has a sculpture that most resembles the body. It arches and curves like a spine. The bright orange fish, unlike the smaller brown fish in the other tanks, follow you as you circle the tank. They track the visitor's movements creating a feeling of self awareness.

If the first room is the ocean, the second room is the desert. Warm red and orange light flood the space. A large ceramic piece on the ground is made up of segmented vessels joined into a singular form. The outside is smooth and shaped like the breasts of the She-wolf in the Romulus and Remus myth. The inside of the form is a striking contrast to the exterior. Hundreds of spikes line the inside of the vessel. A form of nurture and nourishment drastically shifts to menace. At its core, Staros's work pulls from the volatility and anxiety of these vessels. In this way, she treats the body as a vessel: changing, drowning, and reviving in a wholly altered way.



*so super sorry sir!*, installation view, Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, January 16–March 6, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian. Photo: Morgan Waltz.

Meanwhile, the paintings of Michael Stamm displayed in the side room, are a series of self-made icons. Illustrations of the devil, his bright red body naked and recumbent, appears in several of Stamm's pieces. Repeated images of our Lady of Seven Sorrows clues the viewer into the kind of iconography Stamm uses to discuss self-awareness, comedy, punishment, and the pursuit of happiness.

These paintings are shape shifters; the protagonist in one becomes the antagonist in another. Stamm encourages dissonance as he tackles this intricate terrain. Because Stamm works in codes, metaphors, and symbols, learning parts of Stamm's biography as a gay man casts an autobiographical lens with which to decrypt his important work.

**Shulamit Nazarian**

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