

ALEXANDRE

Weeds and Spores



Weeds & Spores
June 22 – August 12

Alexandre
291 Grand Street, New York

*The place for the moment is ours
For you, O tumultuous flowers,
To go to waste and go wild in,
All shapes and colors of flowers,
I needn't call you by name.*

– Robert Frost, from "The Last Mowing"

A group show at Alexandre Gallery, curated by Faye Hirsch, takes as its theme "Weeds and Spores," referring to plants that grow wild in summer meadows, gardens and swamps, and to wind-borne pollen, with its microscopic spores, which allows them to generate. Works in a variety of mediums and scales range in imagery from floral specimens gathered for display to vase-averse climbers and clinging lichens, as well as abstractions evincing an imaginary language of growth and transformation.

Artists are Ann Agee, Polly Apfelbaum, Brett Bigbee, Matt Bollinger, Frieda Dean, Lois Dodd, Rochelle Feinstein, Sharon Horvath, Judith Linhares, Christiane Löhr, Loren MacIver, Tony Matelli, Judy Pfaff, Suzanne McClelland, Robert Kushner, Anne Poor, Andrew Raftery, Jeanne Silverthorne, Joan Snyder, Kiki Smith, Patricia Treib and Terry Winters.

Lois Dodd long resisted what she saw as the danger of becoming a low-caste "flower painter," and from the start, therefore, she was drawn to the unsentimental formal structure of weeds like dandelions and cow parsley. Matthew Bollinger follows her lead in allowing the plant to structure our sight, while pursuing his own path of empathy for the marginalized—though his subjects are, more commonly, human specimens. But what, in fact, is a weed? Throughout the Internet, that question is answered with some variation on "a weed is a plant that grows in the wrong place." For the observational artists in this exhibition, such plants are dignified by notice, as in a summery painted scroll by Robert Kushner; a ground cover of common early summer weeds visited by a bee, by Brett Bigbee. In Anne Poor's window, a cat stretches beside a few random flowers that barely qualify as an arrangement, the point being more a continuity between the view and an indoors suffused with light and air. Andrew Raftery, himself a consummate gardener, blankets a wallpaper trellis with "not-angiosperms," non-flowering ferns and lichens with an arts-and-crafts lushness. For Tony Matelli, observation becomes tromp-l'oeil in painted cast-bronze invaders that "grow" where gallery walls and floor meet.

Jeanne Silverthorne's somewhat malevolent, phosphorescent weeds sprout from within a rolled-up rubber mat as if in some corner of a neglected garden shed. Boosted to greater prestige within the domestic interior, Judith Linhares' generic daisies, crowded to surfeit,

291 Grand Street, New York, New York 10002

25 East 73rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10021 212.755.2828 alexandregallery.com

ALEXANDRE GALLERY ALEXANDRE FINE ART INC. ESTABLISHED 1996

seem to radiate sunshine, as conveyed in the colored beams around them; her red ink still life studies are wonky, one of them transpiring in a squat, shoe-like container and the other set on a tablecloth that seems to have caught a floral contagion. That wonkiness is the very substance of Ann Agee's ruffly white porcelain lamp bases and a sculpture that seems the very hybrid of girl and weed. A few of the artists bring in actual plants, Christiane Löhr creating small, extraordinary architectures of dried seedheads or tiny branches, and Joan Snyder sowing her melancholy autumn field with harvested seeds and grass. Frieda Dean burns away actual, porcelain-clay slipcoated Spanish moss at high temperatures to create otherworldly mounds, pocked and mottled with chroma.

Untethering plants from what we see, artists plunge them into the realm of the imaginary, an overrun garden at best. Sharon Horvath's monstrous "Parasitic Love Vine" overwhelms the canvas and looms, where Kiki Smith's penumbral etched dandelions promise healing powers beyond their humble physical incarnation. Suzanne McClelland's *Healing Code (For Plant Kingdom Attunement)* issues a numerical formula to allow for painterly communion, while Patricia Treib merely suggests plant and sky to leave more specific naming unsaid. The spiritual dimension seems precisely the point in three woodcuts by Judy Pfaff that spin flora and historical printed material in little whirlwinds of dispersion, while Loren MacIver's oil paint nosegays glow with otherworldly light. Terry Winters imagines the microscopic world of pollen in relief prints that resemble a confectioner's display. Here, the powdery dust seems to fly. And what of cardboard? That weed of artistic mediums constitutes Rochelle Feinstein's *Pensée*, its title the etymological source for pansies, here in black and white and floating in a psychedelic miasma. And Polly Apfelbaum's monumental woodcut *Love Alley 4* brings a pop exuberance to the mix, the psychedelia even more palpable in a whiff of sixties flower-power. In such representations the work of the imagination takes over, perhaps enacting a resistance to the merely lovely.

*Long live the weeds that overwhelm
My narrow vegetable realm!—
The bitter rock, the barren soil
That force the son of man to toil;
All things unholy, marked by curse,
The ugly of the universe.
The rough, the wicked, and the wild
That keep the spirit undefiled.
With these I match my little wit
And earn the right to stand or sit,
Hope, look, create, or drink and die:
These shape the creature that is I.*

– Theodore Roethke, "Long Live the Weeds"

Image: Loren MacIver, *Porte Bonheur*, 1980, oil on canvas, 21 3/4 x 18 inches

General inquiries: inquiries@alexandregallery.com

Press inquiries: Hyatt Mannix, DANA_MANNIX_hyatt@danamannix.com

291 Grand Street, New York, New York 10002

25 East 73rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10021 212.755.2828 alexandregallery.com

ALEXANDRE GALLERY ALEXANDRE FINE ART INC. ESTABLISHED 1996