

Flora + Fauna

04 – 27 April 2019
1 Davies Street W1
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6 pm

This April, Sadie Coles HQ presents *Flora + Fauna*, an exhibition on the theme of nature as imagined through the different styles of sixteen of the gallery's artists. Spanning different media – including drawing, painting, photography and sculpture – the exhibition will highlight the ways in which artists have embraced, subverted and reinvented the traditional (and traditionally 'safe' and sentimental) stuff of flowers, plants and animals.



Various artists in the exhibition embrace the genres of flower painting and still life, reanimating these classic – or arguably clichéd – modes of representation to pursue ideas of colour, shape and figuration. In a series of paintings by Laura Owens, flowers appear as evanescent flashes – alternately dematerializing into scattered impressions and coalescing into a graphic silhouette. The silhouette reappears as a structural and symbolic motif in Wilhelm Sasnal's painting of stretched ferns floating in a minimalist box, and again in Simon Periton *Mosstrooper* (2018), a semi-dissected leaf magnified into a free-standing emblem. Don Brown's *Plum* (2008), an enlarged bronze plum elevated on a rod, hovers similarly between metaphorical import and crisp formalism. An equivalent dualism occurs (in strikingly different terms) in Hilary Lloyd's video *Parrot* (2017), featuring a close-up of an electric-green bird – at once a nature study and a celebration of hypnotic colour.

Throughout, we find artists playing with the sentimental and picturesque possibilities of nature while pushing the subject into more ambivalent territory. Borna Sammak's *TBC* (2019) is an embroidered picture of a fox's head that evokes decorative furnishings while swerving clear of the 'cute' connotations the motif. A number of works edge towards the darker and more ambiguous aspects of nature and 'supernature' (a term coined by the biologist Lyall Watson, who sought to understand supernatural phenomena in biological terms). The drawings of Christiana Soulou, inspired by Jorge Luis Borges's *Book of Imaginary Beings* (1957), transform literary chimeras into images – hybrid or mythic beasts that remain uncannily recognisable.

Numerous other works examine the symbolic, surreal and performative appeal of animals – from the domestic to the preternatural. Shannon Ebner's photographs of pigeons frozen in different positions against a white sky recast the 'bird in flight' as a kind of code or semaphore. Paloma Varga Weisz's watercolours present animals as characters that might have been transposed from fables, while Monster Chetwynd's animal costumes, made for her 2016 film and performance *Dogsy Ma Bone*, celebrate supposedly 'ugly' and ungainly attributes. Seemingly inviting us to step into animal roles, her strung-up costumes conjure a mood of possibility that is reflected in their theatrical backdrop, a panorama of the Roman fresco from Livia's villa. In this ancient garden scene, flowers and fruits from different seasons bloom together in impossible synchrony.

Here and elsewhere, the category of landscape stands as a kind of imaginative and poetic terrain. Michele Abeles's *Milano* series of prints on aluminium (2016) use the motif of jungle foliage – reminiscent of the dream scenes of Henri Rousseau – within a larger collage of tinted 'compartments' suggestive of displaced memories (the nude male body appears an incongruous piece of the scenery). An equivalent tension between coherence and disjunction is traceable in Daniel Sinsel's painting *Untitled* (2018), in which clover leaves are woven into an abstract constellation of meandering lines and fleshy nodules. Elsewhere, in Urs Fischer's sculpture *Bless Them All* (2018), the poetic possibilities of nature are weighed up – almost literally – in the form of a meticulous bronze cast of a fallen branch that has been adorned with globular 'cartoon' birds. In its jangling elements, Fischer's object flits between earthbound literalism and breezy fantasy.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or press@sadiecoles.com