

New York Exhibition

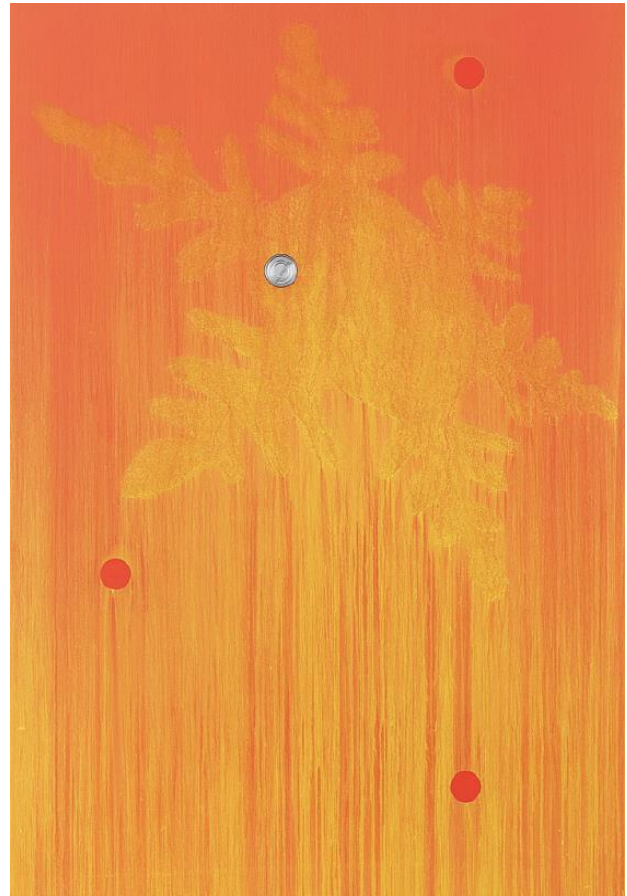
This Sacred Vessel (pt. I)

MICHAEL ASSIFF, MELANIE AUTHIER,
BROOK HSU, CINDY JI HYE KIM, WANDA
KOOP, ALEX KWARTLER, FRANÇOIS
LACASSE, RICK LEONG, SOJOURNER TRUTH
PARSONS, JANET WERNER

Feb 6 – Mar 1, 2020

Arsenal Contemporary is pleased to present *This Sacred Vessel (pt. 1)*. Reflecting on the long shadow cast by the tradition of landscape painting, this exhibition explores a complex relationship to the environment as it undergoes grave changes. The ten painters gathered in the exhibition carve out space through their chosen medium — grasping the complexities between ecological and personal anxiety. Varying from abstraction and representation, reality and illusion, the selection of paintings speaks to the indelible human mark on nature, retranslated in certain cases as psychological states rather than definite sites. By deliberately not upholding the canonical genre, the artists allow their work to diverge from the legacies of exploration, colonialism and the cartesian portrayal of space. Instead, space-making is here reshaped around the understanding of the world as one enmeshed and entangled with this damaged, ever-changing earth and our personal relation to it.

The subdued intensity of Alex Kwartler's bright orange painting depicts a deliquescing snowflake within a blazing surrounding. Brook Hsu's use of toxic green alludes to a corrosive yet ethereal universe. The intimate scale of her painting prompts the viewer to come close, establishing tight proximity with her works, allowing them to enter the loose fables she composes. In turn, François Lacasse's paintings seem to refer to a vast subaquatic landscape overrun by amoebas. There is something similarly oceanic in Melanie Authier's painting, albeit more diaphanous. Behind the draping shapes and delicate palette of Authier's painting, there is an impression of movement, fastening the viewer under her breaking wave. Rick Leong's large painting depicts seaside bank in which sediments and water currents are been stacked into a vertical composition. The



Alex Kwartler, *Yellow Snowflake (with tuna)*, 2019, oil and pumice on linen with aluminum can. 72 x 48 in. Image courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains (New York).

miry strata trigger a sense of discomfort as we come to understand this swampy accretion as an index of water level changes that will ultimately yield disaster.

In Michael Assiff's paintings, nature appears barren; unable to thrive. A floral arrangement seems paralyzed under a heavy coat of paint, as if frozen in a perpetual state of display. In reality, Assiff's work is defined by a painstaking process of careful preparation, taking hours to assemble a detailed composition and the verisimilitude of flora that is his subject. Wanda Koop's works are concerned with the intangible forces that have an impact on the environment, such as radio waves, nuclear activity, and pollution. Her work is informed by the constant flow of information that appries our relationship to the natural world. Multilayered in blooms of color, they reveal a quiet meditation on the malaise of our times brought on by pressing ecology plights.

Cindy Ji Hye Kim's phenakistoscope painting, a reference to this early animation device, paradoxically amplifies the fixedness of the subjects caught within it. Perpetually climbing a ladder in this implied animation, these female characters foolhardily aim to reach a higher point, a clearer vantage, of a dense site like the cities we inhabit. The delicate palette and curated pastiche of Sojourner Truth Parson's canvas suggests a cityscape viewed through literal rose-tinted glasses. This deeply personal exploration of a public space parses through the marriage of iconic vantages and the quiet pleasures of the everyday. Trained in portraiture, Janet Werner's works are composites of images of (mostly) women culled from fashion magazines. The spaces these subjects inhabit straddle an ideological openness and the trappings of psychological anxiety of the ideal realms that only these sleek images capture.

Michael Assiff (b. 1983 in St.Petersburg, FL, lives and works in Queens, NY). His work has been exhibited at Valentin (Paris), at the Rijksakademie (Amsterdam) and Magenta Plains (New York).

Melanie Authier (b. 1980 in Montreal, QC, lives and works in Val-des-Monts, QC). Notable exhibitions include *Contrariedades & Counterpoints* at Ottawa Art Gallery and Galerie de l'UQAM (Montreal) and *Amplitude of the Infinite* at Georgia Sherman Projects (Toronto), *Builders: The Canadian Biennial* at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa).

Brook Hsu (b. 1987 in Pullman, WA, lives and works in New York. Her work has been shown at the Bahamas Biennial, Bortolami (New York), and Et al. (San Francisco) and the Renaissance Society (Chicago)

Cindy Ji Hye Kim (b. 1990 in Anyang, South Korea, lives and works in New York). Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Marianne Boesky (New York), Foxy Production (New York), Helena Anrather (New York), Cooper Cole (Toronto) and Interstate (New York).

Wanda Koop (b. 1951 in Vancouver, BC, lives and works in Winnipeg, MB) Major exhibitions have been held at the National Gallery of Canada in 2011 and the Dallas Museum of Art in 2019. Koop has been the recipient of numerous awards, honorary doctorates, and Canadian medals of honor, including the nation's highest civilian honor, the Order of Canada, in 2006.

Alex Kwartler (b. 1979 in New York, lives and works in New York). He has exhibited his work at MoMA P.S.1 (New York), Bortolami Gallery (New York), Casey Kaplan (New York), Magenta Plains (New York) and Petzel Gallery (New York).

François Lacasse (b. 1958 in Rawdon, QC, lives and works in Montreal). His work was shown at Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art.

Rick Leong (b. 1973 in Burnaby, B.C., Lives and works in Victoria, BC). Notable exhibitions include *The Fourth Pleasure* at Parisian Laundry (Montreal) and *Swell* at Empty Gallery (Victoria), *The Transformation of Things* at the Richmond Art Gallery (Richmond, BC).

Sojourner Truth Parsons (b. 1982 in Vancouver, lives and works in New York) She has exhibited in group and solo exhibitions at Lyles and King (New York), Oakville Galleries (Oakville), Night Gallery (Los Angeles).

Janet Werner (b. 1959 in Winnipeg, MB, lives and works in Montreal). This year, the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art opened a retrospective exhibition of her work. Her work has been showed at MASS MoCA (North Adams), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto) and Plug In ICA (Winnipeg).

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