

I Cast to Earth A Seed

January 6 - February 10, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday January 6 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Galleri Urbane is pleased to present *I Cast To Earth a Seed*, a group exhibition of five painters. These are not the floral still-lives or bowls of fruit of Dutch interiors or Italian *natura morta*. Most are not composed from observation, but from photographs or other sources of imagery (or imagination). In their myriad forms, they encapsulate the natural and unnatural. The plant and seed traverse all subject matter. What can they teach us about contemporary life, the banality of living through crisis, the province of hope? The artists of *I Cast To Earth a Seed* know that ultimately, this is the beginning ... and the end ... and both simultaneously.

"I try to invent flowers that don't exist," Bertrand Fournier says. Starting on a tablet, he composes shapes. In his fantastical, playful compositions, bright, vibrant colors and patterns pop. Though inexistent and imaginary, they nonetheless tilt universal, for "the least touch of color we put in a painting reminds us of a flower," the artist says. A slim, single layer of paint enhances the two-dimensionality of the image and the purity of color—the pinks, blacks, yellows. Yet the effect is immersive.

An alchemy underlies Lori Larusso's flowers, which have their own currency. The artist reduces found images to values, then simplifies them into shapes. The image is "reduced—not all the shapes, but some," she says. In that subtraction, she enters the uncanny valley, where the subject/object can become at once more "real" and yet more "fake." Her work with shadows—so present they become their own actors in the paintings—and flatness underscores the simultaneous un- and hyper-reality. Formal painterly qualities at the fore—the way light hits a glass or a stem slips between shades when in water—remain to be read on the surface, challenging the viewer to see them as flower paintings—nothing more, nothing less.

"You're looking at a staging, at a window, at a world," Robert Minervini says. The artist has been thinking about botanical painting as much as a trope in Western painting as a marker of domesticity and internal life. With the pandemic, spending time inside, he found a new focus on internal life emerged: the voyeuristic perspective of early American or Dutch landscape painting, where the viewer regards the scene, feels fitting. Though here we encounter urban gardens, with a sun or moon that sits eerily above the horizon and airbrushed effects of light and color that suggest contemporaneity and dystopic otherworldliness at once. Tension between the ordinary and otherworldly evokes what Minervini calls "the banality of the abnormal": A still-life that's like the eye of a storm (perhaps ours), quiet and surreal.

In Puerto Rico, there is only one season, one general pattern of weather and climate. "I'm thinking about Puerto Rico most of the time when I'm working with this subject. And what it means to have a garden," Juan Alberto Negroni says. In his highly symmetrical floral compositions—works that lie between painting and drawing—he enters the realm of fantasy, recreating a place where "the greens are luscious; the reds are insane." These are not specific flowers, but flowers of yearning and imagination. "Here [in Texas], I have a weeping willow in my backyard, not a mango tree," the artist says. How, then, does that play into nostalgia? The eloquent grid harkens to the architectural structures in his typical home in Puerto Rico. A flatness that comes from his printmaking background also speaks to his native land and its artistic legacy. Sometimes the seed cast to earth is the seed of where we're from.

Nothing speaks directly of flowers in the works of Michelle Wasson. Not the haunting haziness. Not the rich, soft, subdued hues. Nor the shapes like elongated specters. Yet they telegraph with a mysterious efficacy. The works, lush and layered, evoke dualities. They contain a mystic and haptic quality. And for all the softness or vigor—the artist is steeped in fertility symbols and warrior goddesses—there exists a *memento mori* element, for each flower bears a hint of its own demise, "hidden in the cycle of life and death," the artist says. The monochromatism encourages a mood that corresponds with inner life—a meditative space—while the semi-abstraction untethers the work from a singular view and lends mystery and open-endedness to interpretation. We are "going to a place that's not here in this world, that's quieter, safer," Wasson says. A haven. An alternate world without limitations.

GALLERI URBANE

Bertrand Fournier: Bio

Bertrand Fournier (1985) lives and works in Janville Sur Juine, France. Between abstraction and symbolism, figuration and minimalism, Bertrand Fournier works principally on color and its combinations. The use of color is strong and outspoken with a vintage touch. The cheeky titles give small clues regarding the unfamiliar figures and compositions. The lines he sets up are clear and decisive, while his brushstroke with the use of oil paint gives the right visual aspect and texture on the canvas. Fournier has been included in exhibitions in Miami, LA, Sydney, New York, and extensively across Europe.



GALLERI URBANE

Lori Larusso: Bio

Lori Larusso is an American visual artist working primarily with themes of domesticity and foodways. Her body of work encompasses paintings and installations that explore issues of class, gender, and anthropocentrism, and how these practices both reflect and shape culture.

Larusso's work is exhibited widely in the US and is included in numerous public and private collections. She has been awarded numerous residency fellowships including Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, McColl Center for Art + Innovation, Sam & Adele Golden Foundation, Art + History Museums Maitland, and MacDowell where she received a Milton and Sally Avery Fellowship. She is a recipient of the Kentucky Arts Council's Al Smith Fellowship, multiple grants from the Great Meadows Foundation and the Kentucky Foundation for Women. Larusso is the 2019 Kentucky South Arts Fellow and is the recipient of the 2020 Fischer Prize for Visual Art.

Lori Larusso earned an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and a BFA from the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP). She currently lives and works in Louisville, Kentucky and is represented by Galleri Urbane in Dallas, TX.



Robert Minervini: Bio

Robert Minervini received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, and his BFA from Tyler School of Art. His work has been exhibited nationally, including solo shows with Hirschl & Adler Modern, NYC; Edward Cella Gallery, LA; Rena Bransten Gallery, SF; as well as group and two-person exhibitions with the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, Torrance Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. He has completed multiple murals and public art commissions nationally including through the San Francisco Arts Commission, The Alameda County Arts Commission, and the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. He has been a resident artist at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, the Headlands Center of the Arts, and the Vermont Studio Center. Minervini's work has been reviewed in the LA Times, Modern Painters, San Francisco Chronicle, Art Ltd., and featured in ArtWeek LA, 7x7 Magazine, and The Huffington Post. His work is in the collections of the San Jose Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the City and County of San Francisco, and many private and corporate collections. He currently lives and works in Florence, Italy and Oakland, California.



Juan Alberto Negroni: Bio

Juan Alberto Negroni (Bayamón PR 1979) possess an MFA in Studio Arts from Southern Methodist University in Dallas TX, an MA Ed in Art History and Museum Studies from Caribbean University PR and a BFA with a Major in Printmaking from Puerto Rico School of Fine Arts and Design. Counts with seven solo shows, *The Defect Effect*, *If it weren't for my horse*, *Not About Beauty* (Religion, Politics and other failures) all in San Juan, PR, *Tiny Floral Show*, in Dallas TX and *A Midsummers Night's Dream* at 18.2208° N, 66.5901° W, Texas Woman's University, Denton TX, *Sereno* at Carneal Simmons, Pacificaribbean at the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, San Luis Obispo CA and *Maneras de Llegar* at Sagrado Corazón Univ. Art Gallery in San Juan PR.

Negroni has participated in multiple group shows such as *Detroit: A Brooklyn Case Study*, *SUPERFRONT LA*, Los Angeles CA 2010, *Dialectic City*, curated by Carla Acevedo-Yates (w/Francis Alj's, David Lamelas, among others), *Muestra Nacional de Arts*, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan PR 2015 and 2018, *Art in America*, (Curated by Julie Torres) at The Satellite Show in Miami FL 2015 & Elizabeth Stone Harper Gallery, SC in 2016, *Kinds of Monuments*, (w/ Christian Boltanski, Luis Camnitzer, Cai-Guo-Qiang, Robert Morrison, Alberto Burri, amongst others), *Zattere Cultural Flow Zone*, Dorsoduro, Venice IT, *2da Gran Bienal Tropical* in Loiza, PR, *Home & Visitor* at Le Consortium, Dijon FR, *Topologies of Excess: A Survey of Contemporary Practices from Puerto Rico* (curated by Emma Saperstein and Mariola Rosario), Harold J. Miozzi Art Gallery, San Luis Obispo CA, *Hail Mary* at Liliana Bloch Gallery, *Equity in the Arts Fellowship Exhibition*, Talley Dunn Gallery, Dallas TX, *Galée Royale* at Galerie Rompone, Cologne DE, *Garden Party*, curated by Danielle Avram and many others.

He is a recipient of the Meadows Artistic Scholarship Award 2015 and the 2017 Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'art Dijon Residency Fellowship.

His practice has been documented in printed press and magazines like, *ArtPulse*, *El Nuevo Día* and *PATRON Magazine*.



GALLERI URBANE

Michelle Wasson: Bio

Michelle Wasson is an internationally exhibiting artist based in Chicago, IL. Her work has most recently been included in exhibitions at Hyde Park Art Center, Aspect/Ratio Projects Chicago and Brand Library Art Center in Glendale, CA.

An independent artist, she has served as faculty at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbia College Chicago and The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 2016 she co-founded the artist run exhibition space Tiger Strikes Asteroid Chicago. Wasson received her MFA from Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

