

Mel Arsenault

Views from the Windows of a Dreamed-of House

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When she closes her eyes, Mel Arsenault imagines looking out a window onto lush vegetation, an abundance of flowers, and a sky filled with stars. She dreams of a verdant, unpolluted natural world. The works in this new body of work emerge from this waking dream. In *Views from the Windows of a Dreamed-of House*, Arsenault envisions a life in harmony with the living world, where humans, flowers, and butterflies coexist in a spirit of reciprocity.

Vases, ceramic sculptures, wall works, and silk prints become vessels for this abundant natural world, their three-dimensional forms providing open spaces for it to take shape. Petals and leaves overlap, while butterflies and dragonflies drift from one vase to another, or alight on sculptures. Water lilies become one with the water, reflecting the splendour of the sky and the Milky Way.

Arsenault's ceramic practice is closely aligned with painting. Her glazes carry colour while bringing luminosity and radiance to the surfaces, and introducing an element of chance. Layered together, the glazes may oxidize; a longer firing can alter their colours, subtly shifting their tones. The final result can therefore never be fully anticipated. This uncertainty mirrors the workings of nature itself, shaped by a dynamic network of ever-changing interconnections: the colours of plants shift with the light, butterflies respond to fluctuations in temperature, leaves grow fuller with rain, and stars emerge more vividly when the sky is clear and free from the city lights.

La maison d'eau, Sous les étoiles, and the other works in the series come together as an imagined home where plants and other forms of life can flourish alongside human beings. Here, nature is not something outside the built environment, but an essential part of it. Through their luminosity and radiance, the works invite us to reconnect with the sense of wonder our surroundings can inspire. Like windows opening onto a world in which everything is connected, they suggest another way of inhabiting space—one grounded in a harmonious relationship with the living world and the universe as a whole.

-Manel Benchabane, contemporary art curator and writer based in Tiohtià/Montréal.