

Melanie Flood
projects

Sarah
Meadows
"Tanglefoot"
July 30 - August 27

420 sw Washington st. (#301)
Portland, or 97204
melaniefloodprojects.com

A Tanglefoot Trap can take the shape of a red apple, perfectly round, juicy and crisp. It can take the guise of a sunflower too—its flat, yellow petals coated in lashes of a fatal goo designed to capture any insect unlucky enough to succumb to its bright and friendly appearance. Created to lure tiny bodies into the sticky mess of their own desire, there is a violence lurking beneath the surface of these seductive images.

In her practice, Sarah Meadows probes her own sticky entanglement with the images that shape, mediate and flatten our experience of the 'natural' world. Balancing opposites, her exhibition TANGLEFOOT explores the tension between what we would like to see when we look at the non-human world and what is actually there, through an assortment of archival images interweaved with Meadows' own flash-lit photographs. In the uneven terrain mapped out in the space, a paradox at the heart of our relationship to the environment is unearthed: a deep reverence of nature and an unending desire to control and refine it.

In one collage, a plump melon—its given-name "YELLOW BUTTERCUP HYBRID" spelled out buoyantly below—is punctured by several other images. A spattering of Deer Scat, an ominous metal cage, a hand crisscrossed by mesh and a group of people constructing a greenhouse. In this particular ecosystem of pictures, a feeling of decay and threat unfolds out of and around the fruit's bright and cheery flesh. A compulsive appetite for images underpins Meadows' research who, over the past five years, has collected a huge pool of material from seed catalogs to old gardening books via screen grabs of YouTube gardening videos. An endless choice of plants, elaborate names, repetition and variation, step-by-step instructions and rows upon rows of tools and contraptions fill the drawers of her collection with images that encourage, resolve, promise and dream. This picturesque natural world they offer up is one for the making and taking, where every problem has a novel solution just one purchase away.

Brimming with confidence, the archival images that find themselves in this exhibition—mostly belonging to an optimistic post-war America—speak to a compartmentalization and commercialization of nature that reaches far back into the Victorian era of horticulture and saturates our present in the form of our current obsession with houseplants. Emptied of their function and placed into conversation with other pictures, they become markers of a fantasy, drawing attention to our expectations of nature and how they are cultivated. No longer clean solutions, they ask questions of us. Which aspects of nature do we find beautiful? How do we get what we want? Where do we draw the line? How else can we connect with the world around us?

Seduced and questioning in equal measure, the artist plays with these found images drawing out their beauty, humor and sinister undertones, wondering all the while how they might feed into her own photographic impulses. Meadows has been interested in nature since childhood, when the outdoors was an escape to a space of endless possibility. It's a feeling that prevails in her practice, though now tinged with the anxiety of our times. In her own photographs, she steps out from the dizzying image-world in search of everything its crisp, purposeful images might evade. Groping around, often at night, the camera becomes a means to explore and touch her surroundings, illuminating both the abject and the beautiful, both delicate flowers and the twisted wire cages that contain them. Using her flash "like a child pointing their finger," she hones in on small details, at times finding solace in quiet, sensory moments, at others expressing a feeling of disquiet. As if peeling back the surface of one of the shiny catalogs stacked in the artist's house, the world revealed in these photographs is an unruly one, inhabited by strange creatures and peppered with the mysterious devices created to keep them in check.

– Sophie Wright



Sarah Meadows

Trap, 2022

Archival pigment print mounted to dibond and plexiglass

38h x 30w in

Edition of 3

SM_001_001

Melanie Flood Projects

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Sarah Meadows

Flag (Sir Michael Foster), 2022

Archival pigment print, mounted to dibond and plexiglass

38h x 30w in

Edition of 3

SM_002_001

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Sarah Meadows

Mantis, 2022

Archival pigment print, mounted to dibond and plexiglass

38h x 30w in

Edition of 3

SM_003_001

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Sarah Meadows
Persistence I, 2022

Archival pigment print, mounted to dibond and plexiglass

20h x 25w in

Edition of 3

SM_004_001

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Sarah Meadows
Persistence II, 2022

Archival pigment print, mounted to dibond and plexiglass

16h x 20w in

Edition of 3

SM_005_001

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Sarah Meadows

Cage, 2022

Archival pigment print, cotton rag mat Maple frame

10h x 8w in

Edition of 3

SM_006_001

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Sarah Meadows
My Sylvan Family, 2022
Archival pigment prints, cotton rag mat
10h x 8w in
Edition of 3
SM_007_001

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Sarah Meadows

I wish I were a snail, 2022

Archival pigment prints, cotton rag mat Maple frame

10h x 8w in

Edition of 3

SM_008_001

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Sarah Meadows

Early Blight, 2022

Archival inkjet print, self-adhesive rhinestones, maple frame

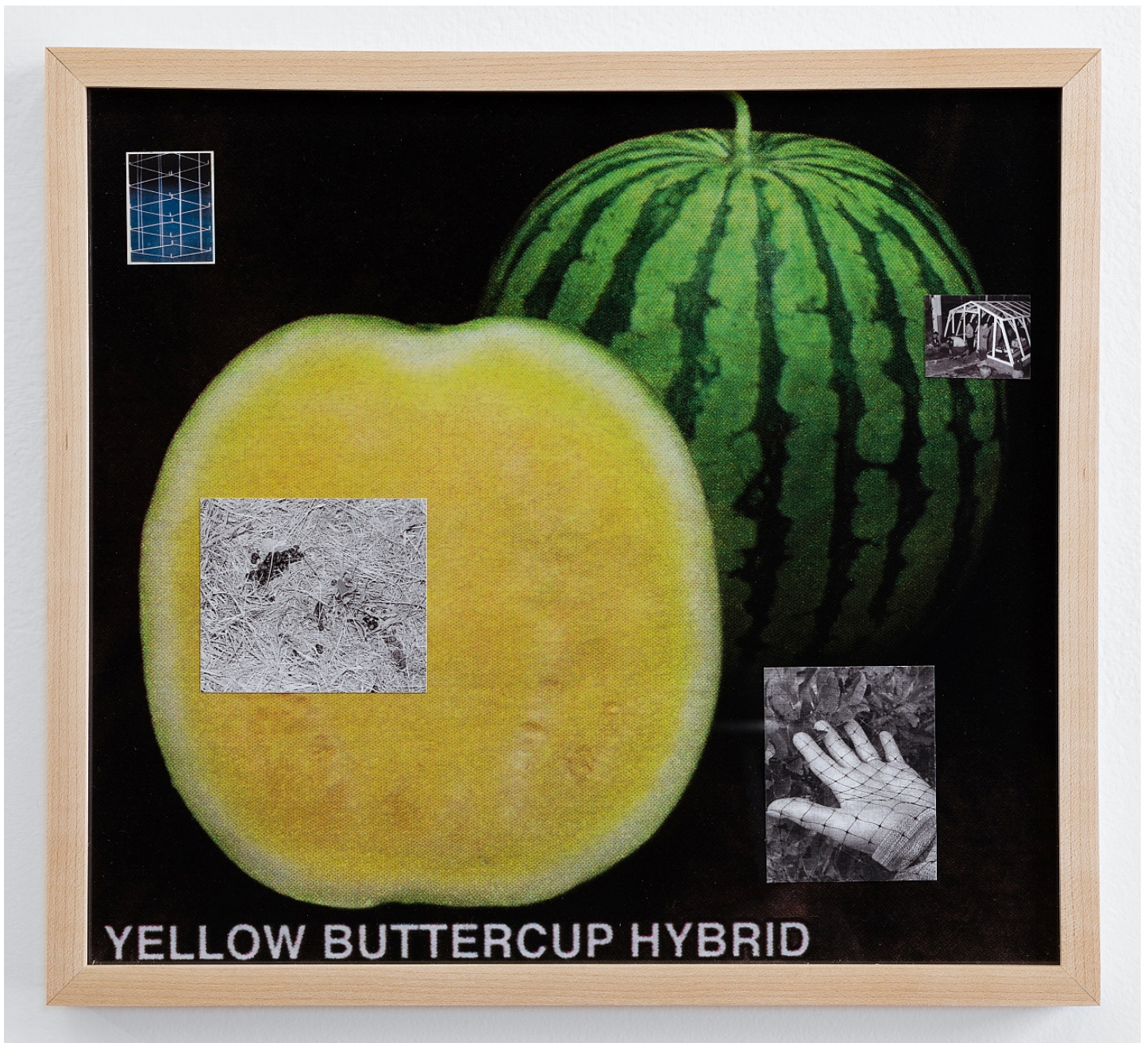
9 1/2h x 8w in

Edition of 3

SM_013

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Sarah Meadows

Buttercup hybrid, 2022

Archival pigment prints, found images, maple frame

14h x 12 1/2w in

Unique

SM_012

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SARAH MEADOWS: *Tanglefoot*

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Sarah Meadows

Paperweight, 2022

glass, archival pigment print, felt

Edition of 3

SM_020

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