

‘An Ocean Standing’

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Kenneth Bergfeld,
Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, Nina Kinsturashvili, Anna Zemánková
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“If Lispector is capable of lingering with the imperceptibly opening flowers, this is because, for her, the instant, every single one of them, is vegetal. ‘And from the instants, I extract the juice of their fruits. I must deprive myself to reach the core and seed of life. The instant is living seed.’ The instant is, at once, fruit and seed, the end and a new beginning.”

Michael Marder, “Lispector’s Seeds”

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LC Queisser is pleased to present ‘An Ocean Standing’, an exhibition featuring works from Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Kenneth Bergfeld, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, Nina Kinsturashvili and Anna Zemánková.

In his essay on Clarice Lispector’s work, philosopher Michael Marder writes, “the implicit mediator between [Lispector] and this world is time: the time of the world and of one’s own life expressed through parts of plants and through the milestones of germination, maturation, or decay.” Lispector’s lingering attention to the elusive instant is described as synchronous with the slow and cyclical intervals of vegetal time. The works presented in An Ocean Standing investigate this seemingly paradoxical timescale that is both slowed down and intensified, prolonged and charged, organic and synthetic. In histories of performance, strategies of slowing down or stalling activity have been used to call attention to the time of the performance itself. While the artists featured here work with sculpture, painting, drawing and photography, they each address their chosen medium’s relationship to time through similar methods, bringing process and the timescale of making artwork into the room along the way.

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Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili’s series Quarantine Flowers emerged from the artist’s photographic ritual during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As she writes in her statement on the work; “Very cleverly, or maybe romantically, Germany listed florists as essential to life and so they stayed open. Flowers acquired tremendous allure and symbolism in that anxious time. The sheer stubbornness of their beauty in the face of despair hinted at restorative qualities of nature and so gave one hope.” In Alexi-Meskhishvili’s photographs, the cut flowers become both symbols of hope through the “stubborn beauty” of their form, as well as ambassadors from the outside world during a period of interior isolation.

Kenneth Bergfeld’s paintings depict various figures from the shoulders up, situated in front of ambiguous, vibrant backgrounds. The figures and their settings bear traces of a digital composite logic, as if certain details were cut, pasted and smoothed into place algorithmically. The artist’s perpetual return to these enigmatic avatars suggests an imaginary space, dense with endless combinatory revisions of an unstable yet commanding self.

Made from combinations of organic materials, such as straw and clay, and manufactured materials like wire, coins, and pencils, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur’s sculptures often take the form of animals. The wolves shown here aren’t based on observation of real wolves but rather are brought together through remembered, half-dissolved fragments of the animal. These memories are rooted in the artist’s childhood in Mongolia, where the symbolic meaning of specific animals is heavily shaped through Shamanism. Enkhtur leaves traces of his handwork on the surfaces of his materials, keeping his artistic labor visible in the final sculpture.

Nina Kintsurashvili's paintings begin from her ongoing research into heritage sites and colonial history in Georgia. She travels to archaeological locations, cave monasteries and Soviet archives, collecting images that she then brings to the studio to study and sit with. The collected ancient architectural forms, marked from centuries of historical encounter, are abstracted and layered in her paintings—the specific references left behind, giving way to undulating, lively shape and color.

Anna Zemánková (Czech, 1908-1986) was a prolific, self-taught painter whose practice was almost exclusively focused on flowers and ornamentation. Having grown up in Moravia's Haná region, Zemánková was heavily influenced by the folk clothing that was common there. Many of her paintings and drawings of flowers contain sections of ornate patterns reminiscent of these embroidered costumes. At times, the artist would even take a needle and thread to her artworks, overlaying her pastel and watercolor surfaces with embroidery. Zemánková's works have a strange beauty—the combination of decorative pattern and floral form creates an otherworldliness that feels both lively and artificial, animated and still.

– Marina Caron