

VERONICA

Gretchen Frances Bennett

Guardian, Garden

October 5th - November 16th, 2024

A new large- and small-format color pencil drawing series of plant-life and other elements of nature trace the relationship between art, landscape, and emotion in my work. Meticulous drawings of natural phenomena render elements of landscape in intricate layers that seem to be off-register with each other, establishing an open and interpretive space that speaks to the overlap between the external natural world and those aspects I discern to be elemental in me; ways I'm not that different from a flower.

My use of nature and found images of such act as stand-ins for emotions and world views, and isolate and depict subjects that resonate beyond the momentary; a garden plot encircled with Walmart fencing recalling ancient stone borders, for example. Thematic questions include, *What might a Dahlia look like on a higher dimension?*

I imagine these drawings as souvenirs that carry the power and meaning of place and remembrance. Like objects gathered from a trip or event, they might provide direct transport back to a certain location and remind the carrier that maybe they never left that place. Nothing that happens ever stops happening. If I secret a pebble from somewhere into a pocket, the place stays with me. I ascribe meaning to the pebble by keeping it and my decision to keep it gives it meaning. The drawings activate in this same way.

In the drawing *Atlas (plant life)*, each drawn moment is like a dust mote that takes up little space but is still potent, pointing to the depth and dimension of small daily installments and their affect in the most literal sense. Sensory portals are extracted from a scrolling web to make another net of intricate marks. The drawing *Caryatids* shows those parts of the trees I can see and are a measure of my height the way marks on a wall can be. When I drew these guardian trees from my childhood, who still watch over my house from that time, a “strange one-person clearing”¹ occurred.

Garden plots and weed beds, through repeat encounters, enshrine seemingly marginal patches of cultured nature. These drawings depict landscape elements that prompt circling back, circling back till these spaces become monuments to sensory interchanges and secret assignments. These non-shrines are shrines to me.

– Gretchen Frances Bennett

¹ Davidson W Burnam, ‘The Phenomenon Of Craving Is A Manacled Topiary’, 2024