

NOON Projects Presents

Braided Bestiary: The Challah Show

By Jenna Thornhill

**Curated by
Libby Werbel**

**October 27 –
December 9, 2023**

Opening:
October 27, 2023, 7 – 9 PM

NOON Projects is a gallery in Chinatown, Los Angeles. Our program showcases artists who work from the heart, with a focus on queer-ness, the divine, the natural world, craft, and social practices. We host an ongoing program of dinners, concerts, meditation groups, and community happenings.

We aim to create a welcoming space for artists and the community to connect and flourish. Please come by and see us – you are very welcome here.

NOON Projects is honored to present *Braided Bestiary: The Challah Show*, a solo exhibition of works by Jenna Thornhill, curated by Libby Werbel.

Popularized in the Middle Ages, a bestiary is a compendium of beasts –both real and mythical– elaborately and exhaustively cataloged in a series of illustrated volumes. The drawings and descriptions of each animal were often accompanied by an allegory of some kind, supporting the belief that every living thing (and sometimes even a rock) has its own special meaning.

For her first solo show in her native Los Angeles, Jenna Thornhill offers her own unique version of a bestiary, exhibiting sculptures made entirely of challah bread that have each been formed and baked as an effigy to her life here in Southern California. These sculptures reflect the artist's research of the flora and fauna of the local landscape, the history of the San Pedro region where she currently resides, and her burgeoning interest in ornithology. Often appearing rough or cartoonish at first glance, each work slowly reveals a skilled hand and a fecund imagination.

Much like clay, bread dough is famously (and at times frustratingly) malleable, only revealing its final incarnation in the baking process, rising and changing to resemble something new when it finally emerges. Thornhill plays with this process of uncertainty; the form expanding and growing from yeast, developing a terminal product made even more unpredictable by a final collaboration with her kitchen oven. Each work is ritualistically crafted on Shabbat, the Friday evening dinner symbolizing the beginning of the traditional Jewish day of rest. The end result is either eaten that night, or if deemed worthy by the artist, it is preserved in lacquer and saved as a wall-mountable sculpture. Both of these are considered successful outcomes.

Thornhill's choice to work specifically with challah can also be interpreted as a way to modernize and subvert her role as a Jewish woman, tying a line to an ancestral tradition of baking this particular weekly bread, while also introducing her own sense of humor and contemporary reference into the process. Sealed, hardened, and hanging on the wall, these entombed bread sculptures become a marker of time's passage and an archive of the idiosyncratic themes that piqued Thornhill's interest that particular week. Over years of Shabbats, the dough has taken the shape of favorite pets, Star Trek the Next Generation characters, and the overgrown wild Merino sheep popularized on social media for being "too fluffy to be killed." In the piece *Three Double-Crested Cormorants* she recreates a scene from a Youtube video wherein a rescued baby cormorant is resting on the body of a wooden sculpture resembling a parent bird, while feeding from a human hand wearing a bird puppet. The scene very simply captures a person performing a mitzvah for a needy baby bird. Through this tiny gesture, Thornhill seizes on both the grand potential of humanity's ability for care, and the truly bizarre nature of how that care sometimes manifests.

Both spiritual and playful, these pieces are deeply representational of one artist's experience, while also serving as an offering of hospitality at the shared table of our natural world. It is a personal allegory told through "beasts", and a bridge from tradition to a broader cultural understanding of a life lived on the edge of Los Angeles in 2023.

–Libby Werbel

NOON Projects
951 Chung King Road
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Thursday to Saturday
Noon–6pm
And by Appointment

+ 1 971 341 6648
noon-projects.com
info@noon-projects.com

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Jenna Thornhill
Mr. Jeremy Fisher, 2023
challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass custom
hardware
12 x 6.5 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Zardoz, 2020
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
9 x 8.5 x 2.5 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Red Macaw Eating a Jawbreaker, 2020
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
14.5 x 10 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Great Egret Hunting a Grasshopper, 2023
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
10 x 10 1/2 x 1 1/2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
California Brown Pelican Eating World, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
14 x 7 x 1.5 in.



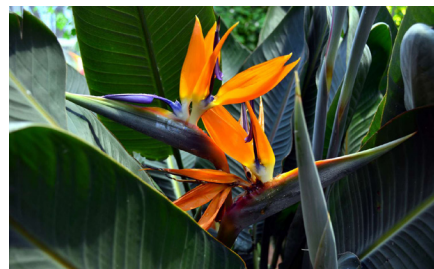


Jenna Thornhill
California Brown Pelican Eating World, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
14 x 7 x 1.5 in. /





Jenna Thornhill
Birds of Paradise with Lenny Aphids, 2022
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
17 x 8 x 1 in./





Jenna Thornhill
Three Double-Crested Cormorants, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
10 x 12 x 1 1/2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Peacock(s) Foraging, 2022
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
7 1/2 x 13 x 2 1/2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Green Heron, 2023
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
6 1/2 x 12 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
New Moon Grunion Run Cabrillo Beach, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
14 x 11 x 2 1/2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Roses and Baby's Breath, 2023
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
12 1/2 x 8 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Jacaranda, 2022

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
10 1/2 x 12 x 1 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Curly Horse, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
12 x 9 1/2 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Braided Garlic, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass custom hardware
15 1/2 x 5 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Perform the Glensit, 2021
challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel hardware
12 x 7 1/2 x 2 in.





Jenna Thornhill
Custom Challah, 2023

Jenna will create a custom Challah for you!
Your dog, your horse, a favourite tree, whatever you want!
Limited edition of 4

Jenna Thornhill

Jenna Thornhill
Mr. Jeremy Fisher, 2023

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
12 x 6.5 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Zardoz, 2020

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
9 x 8.5 x 2.5 in.
\$1,400



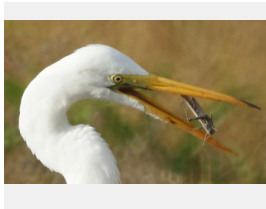
Jenna Thornhill
Red Macaw Eating a Jawbreaker, 2020

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
14.5 x 10 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Great Egret Hunting a Grasshopper, 2023

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
10 x 10.5 x 1.5 in.
\$1,400



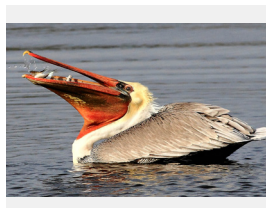
Jenna Thornhill
Cypress Bonsai, 2020

Challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
12 x 11.5 x 2.5 in.
\$1,400



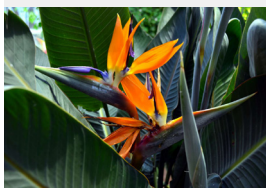
Jenna Thornhill
California Brown Pelican Eating World, 2021

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
14 x 7 x 1.5 in. /
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Bird of Paradise with Lenny Aphids, 2022

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
17 x 8 x 1 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Three Double-Crested Cormorants, 2021

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
10 x 12 x 1.5 in. – in two parts
\$1,400



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Braided Bestiary: *The Challah Show*

Jenna Thornhill
Peacock(s) Foraging, 2022

challah dough, cloves, food coloring,
resin, brass custom hardware
7.5 x 13 x 2.5 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Green Heron, 2023

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
6.5 x 12 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
New Moon Grunion Run Cabrillo Beach, 2021

challah dough, sesame seeds, food co-
loring, silver leaf, brass leaf, resin, steel
hardware
14 x 11 x 2.5 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Roses and Baby's Breath, 2023

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
12.5 x 8 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Jacaranda, 2022

challah dough, food coloring, resin, brass
custom hardware
10.5 x 12 x 1 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Braided Garlic, 2021

challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
15.5 x 5 x 2 in.
\$1,400



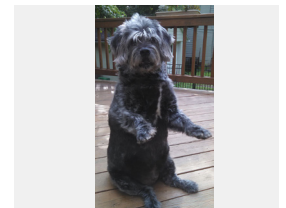
Jenna Thornhill
Curly Horse, 2021

challah dough, food coloring, silver leaf,
resin, steel hardware
12 x 9.5 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Jenna Thornhill
Perform the Glensit, 2021

Challah dough, food coloring, resin, steel
hardware
12 x 7.5 x 2 in.
\$1,400



Biography Jenna Thornhill

Jenna Thornhill (b. 1985, Los Angeles) is an artist, musician, bread-baker, and jewelry-maker born and raised in the San Fernando Valley. After years of playing and touring in LA punk bands, she graduated with a BA in History from UCLA, where she focused on Los Angeles and Jewish history. She began baking challah weekly as a way of observing a regular Shabbat practice in her own way, in part due to the lack of Jewish bakeries in her area.

Over time she began to bake sculptural challahs alongside her standard ones, and would share both with her friends and larger community—bringing special loaves to art and music events. Now living in San Pedro, she takes as inspiration the endless wells of nature, culture, and the history of her city and Judaism itself, alongside certain favorite themes like poodles and sci-fi. Every Rosh Hashanah since 2020, she has published Jewish/Gregorian calendars featuring the previous years' challahs every month. Inspired by radical calendars like the "Slingshot" organizers she first bought as a young punk, they include important historical, local, cultural, and political dates alongside Jewish holidays.

Biography Libby Werbel

Libby Werbel is an artist, curator, and community organizer based in Portland, OR. In 2012, she founded the Portland Museum of Modern Art (PMOMA) to instigate discourse around what a community-built museum could look like through the lens of institutional critique. With an emphasis on accessibility and engagement, Werbel has received public and critical acclaim for her subversive organization methods and creative mobility. Werbel recently fulfilled a two year position as Visiting Artistic Director at the Portland Art Museum, where she created five unique exhibitions, encouraging audiences to think critically about how museums have traditionally granted access to art and knowledge and what the future of the Institution could look like, titled

We.Construct.Marvels.Between.Monuments. and has published a book under the same title.

Werbel currently serves as the Director of the lumber room, an exhibition space for the prestigious Miller Meigs Collection. She has overseen the development of its public programming since 2017, and has art directed two publications during her tenure there; This Cookbook is Made For the 5th Dimension, Susan Cianciolo, 2021 and the forthcoming The Quick, Diedrick Brackens and D'Angelo Lovell Williams, 2023. She has curated site-based exhibitions, partnering with artists and institutions for the MCASB, Santa Barbara, PAM, Portland, (W)here Is The Love(?), Barcelona, Mission17, San Francisco, Big Love Records, Tokyo, Garth's Boulder Garden with Thousand Points of Light and High Desert Test Sites, Joshua Tree, and Pioneer Courthouse Square as a part of the Time Based Arts Festival, Portland. She is a two time recipient of the Precipice Grant, a funding initiative of The Andy Warhol Foundation distributed through Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, for projects developed on the edge of new practice. Werbel additionally teaches in the MFA Studio Art program at Portland State University, and has sat on various selection juries and committees for the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Oregon Arts Commission, Ford Family Foundation, PICA, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Disjecta, and the National Visual Artist Network.

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