

Cryptid or let the body be

Artists	E. Jane
Dates	March 6 - April 10, 2026
Opening	March 6, 6-8 pm
Location	136 Baxter Street New York, NY 10013

Exhibition Text by Kyla Gordon

What she liked was candy buttons, and books, and painted music (deep blue, or delicate silver) and the west sky, so altering, viewed from the steps of the back porch; and dandelions.

She would have liked a lotus, or China asters or the Japanese Iris, or meadow lilies—yes, she would have liked meadow lilies, because the very word meadow made her breathe more deeply, and either fling her arms or want to fling her arms, depending on who was by, rapturously up to whatever was watching in the sky. But dandelions were what she chiefly saw. Yellow jewels for everyday, studding the patched green dress of her back yard. She liked their demure prettiness second to their everydayness; for in that latter quality she thought she saw a picture of herself, and it was comforting to find that what was common could also be a flower.

And could be cherished!

-Maud Martha by Gwendolyn Brooks. pp1-2

A grassy river bank dense with leafy branches, so thick as to obscure the view of the water beyond; in the distance we can see the horizon line of the far shore peeking in between the trees. Upon a closer look, I am startled to notice a lone figure in the water, whose silhouette is largely obscured by the wall of branches pressed up against the foreground.

Skinny Dipping II reminds me of *Maud Martha*, by Gwendolyn Brooks—a novella consisting of a string of vignettes that tell the story of the title character's life and coming of age. The above passage introduces Maud to the reader, a description where she is made known through a rich inner life that is reflected and affirmed in nature. She is not defined by the realities of her identity (she is later revealed to be a black girl living in 1920s Chicago). The narrative structure of *Maud Martha* is shaped by Maud's interior experiences, her introspective musings and memories. Maud sees herself and the contours of her yearning reflected and validated in her backyard's foliage and dandelions; a flower commonly understood as an invasive weed becomes a yellow jewel to be cherished.

Brooks's description of Maud finds a home in E. Jane's practice that imagines a future beyond the limiting concerns of representation and identity, and instead explores black femme interiority and subjectivity. The setting (or placemaking) of black femme interiority is something I see as a main preoccupation in Jane's work. The natural world (in landscapes, flowers, foliage) is central in their practice of staging this interiority, and I often read their incorporation of landscapes and nature as a way of conveying softness, care, and belonging.

Of course it must be mentioned that historically, the woods/wilderness/natural landscapes have long been sites of violence for black bodies and often, continue to be. Also, photography is a medium long synonymous with intrusion, surveillance, and extraction. Despite these tensions, I believe that *Skinny Dipping II* conveys a non vulnerable figure in nature. In this image, Jane explores care at the moment of photographic capture; at the moment an image is made. Jane veils this figure's introspection with layers of protection.

The figure stands in the middle of the composition partially covered by a thick wall of foliage that visually curves around their body in embrace. The positioning of the dense foliage as a protective screen and the distance prevents us from seeing their body clearly. The light purple tinting of the photograph also acts as protection, claiming the landscape as their own. Maybe this figure is Maud, or another black femme, basking in a pocket of quiet –an introspective homescape, an overgrown garden of the mind; as lively and teeming as her desires.