



Natural Transcendence

On view

June 16 – August 22, 2021



Curated by Rhonda Mitrani
928 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach

 Oolite Arts

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***A color stands abroad
on solitary fields
that science cannot overtake
but human nature feels.***

– Excerpt from
A Light Exists in Spring (1891)
By Emily Dickinson



Wendy Wischer, *Where Water and Rock Collide*,
Multi-media installation, 2021

This group show presents artworks that reflect an ethereal sensibility toward nature. During a time when we were forced to stay home, away from public spaces and other people, the relationship between humans and nature shifted, causing a *Natural Transcendence*, and a renewed sense of gratitude for the natural elements that surrounds us.

The exponential rate of infusion of industry and technology into human existence has created a way of life centered on busy routines in an urban culture that has segregated humanity from nature. The pandemic served as a disruptor to the societal distractions that perpetuated this way of life and provided people with the opportunity to re-integrate with nature. Some began to experience nature's elevated effects after this period of confinement, creating daily rituals with our own green landscape. These natural environments are places where we feel a sense of spirituality, generating a deeper connection to one self, to something greater, creating a *Natural Transcendence*. Just as the Black Death led to the great rebirth of the Renaissance and the Spanish Flu fueled the Roaring '20s, a decade that

Participating Artists

accelerated the massive developments of the 20th century, perhaps this re-immersion back to Earth's natural habitat causes a surge for a new environmental movement to be born.

The lens-based artists in this exhibition have been exploring the intersection between humanity and wilderness even prior to the pandemic, but with a new perspective, not just in vast terrains, but in domesticated landscapes, which include parks, bodies of water, quiet walks down their sidewalk and their own backyard.

Through video or photography, these artists provide a visual literacy in their practice by embedding themselves in the landscape or becoming a silent observer. Together they reveal the critical importance of nature in our life, specifically the spiritual, emotion, physical and mental health of human beings.

By fusing themselves into the natural world, these artists give us a chance to feel this *Natural Transcendence* not just as the sublime or as a sense of awe, but hopefully as a wake-up call.

– Rhonda Mitrani

Adler Guerrier
Megan McLarney
Colleen Plumb
Anastasia Samoylova
Jennifer Steinkamp
Wendy Wischer
Antonia Wright



Anastasia Samoylova

Dolphins in Venice, 2021

from the series *Landscape Sublime*,
2013 – present

Single channel video, 4:3,
7 mins 51 seconds, silent.

Courtesy of Dot Fiftyone Gallery

In 2020, dolphins were seen in the canals of Venice, for the first time in living memory. The reduction in human activity caused by the pandemic allowed nature to bounce back in many ways all over the world. Once activity resumes, the dolphins will disappear. Their presence is a bittersweet glimpse of a utopia that may not be achievable.

Dolphins in Venice is part of Anastasia Samoylova's ongoing series *Landscape Sublime*. She works with copyright-free internet images, downloaded, printed out, sculpted into three-dimensional assemblies, and then re-photographed as complex tableaux. The *Landscape Sublime* images are usually printed at a large scale, but for this exhibition Samoylova presents *Dolphins in Venice* as a silent video. It zooms in, and tracks slowly between key details that, akin to looking closely at a large print, reveal the making of the work — the cuts and folds in the paper, the shifts in focus, the fragility of the construction that is made permanent only by the image that records it.



Megan McLarney

Blue Cascade, 2021

Five Channel video installation

Courtesy of the artist

Blue Cascade is a multi-monitor video installation, in which a spring of water flows continuously down the five vertically-oriented screens, alluding to the East Asian scroll painting and flowing in an endless loop.

The videos were sourced near a Dharma meditation center in the woods of the Hudson Valley. Each channel was recorded one after another, yet they appear to play simultaneously due to the repetitive movements one finds in nature.

The video was shot with a small tripod and a simple SLR camera that allowed for quiet, unobtrusive movement through the terrain.



Adler Guerrier

*Untitled (Hello! How am I
spending my time!?), 2020*

Single channel video, 2 minutes
42 seconds

Courtesy of the artist

This video is a response to an inquiry made by the artist, early in the confinement from COVID-19. He enacted his everyday performance of walking the yard, observing and looking for images that retain aspects of domestic space that protect and nurture.

*Untitled (The croton brightens and
dignifies; here we will be.), 2021*

Pigment on vinyl, 30 × 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

This image was shot in March 2020 in a favorite spot of the artist's yard. The image captures a view of variegated croton and tangled palm fronds receiving light. Within his yard, the plants function as a barrier, separating the private space from public view; yet, through the image he intends to show them as expressions of brightness, fullness, and renewal from the stock of that moment. This image is part of a series that explores aspects of domestic landscape as a setting for study and as a framework for understanding notions around wellbeing, sheltering, and replenishment.



Jennifer Steinkamp

Dervish 2, 2004

Single channel video projection, loop
Courtesy of the Margulies Collection,
Miami

Individual trees with twirling branches, as seen in this video, were inspired by a ritual practiced by the priests (dervishes) of the Mevlavi sect of Islam. In the midst of a trance, the dervishes whirl in a motion symbolizing the soul's release from earthly ties and communication with the divine. The movement of the branches in this video contains elements of both control and lawlessness — while the whirling motion of the trees is fanciful and seemingly enchanted, the movement is limited by the roots.



Wendy Wischer

Where Water and Rock Collide, 2021

Multi-media installation
Courtesy of the artist

This multi-media installation can be read as a metaphor to a journey down a river. The story unfolds as a tale captured through notes of a journey, both on and off the water, in a non-linear time frame. With a nod to historical field notes that described and defined the wonders of the natural world, it also echoes the inner journey, the one that always accompanies the wanderer. All rivers, big and small, inside and outside of our bodies, share the same desire. To keep moving forward, no matter what obstacles attempt to divert.



Colleen Plumb

Elsa in the Grass with Dandelions, 2021

Photograph and lightbox,
30×40 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
Dina Mitrani Gallery

These two photographs evoke childhood memories of immersive experience in nature, as the artist poetically describes: “Finding a way, as we used to, to obey the instinct that tugs toward seeking the healing and wise power of the Earth. I’d climb our tree in the backyard, in Rogers Park, behind our house right on Touhy with cars flying down the hill from Ridge blvd, the asphalt that might mask the topography hidden under

Ballet Lesson in the Lake, 2019

Photograph and lightbox,
30×40 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
Dina Mitrani Gallery

layers of concrete. I’d do *Mad Libs* with my cousin in the tree; we’d ride bikes down to the lake. I would lie on the hammock (whose frame always collapsed when we’d rock it like a see-saw) and look at the sky, watch birds dart across the yards. They, kids, the seekers, find the wild (wild enough), and soak it up in quiet awe, feeling a relief in their smallness, as one among other living beings, hearing beyond human conclusions.”

Antonia Wright

Touch Has a Memory # 1 and #3, 2021

Performative abstracted photography

Unique cyanotype photographs on
watercolor paper, digitally transposed

to vinyl and adhered to windows

Courtesy of the artist and Spinello

Projects

The name cyanotype was derived from the Greek word cyan, meaning “dark-blue impression.” This archival process was invented in the 19th century by Anna Atkins, a botanist, and some say, the first female photographer. Atkins created photograms — photographic images made without a camera — by placing algae directly onto photo-sensitive paper and making exposures in the sun.

For this series, Wright collected on her daily walks, tropical plants from her neighborhood, placed it on chemically treated paper in addition to her own body, and created an exposure using sunlight. The results can be interpreted as self portraits, while each unique print is like a performance on the page.

“When the quarantine began, placing my body in physical contact with the plants and a paper was a way to connect during a time so void of touch. These visceral acts evoked memory of a touch.” (Antonia Wright)



For this exhibition, Wright transposed the images to vinyl, creating a membrane that envelope the windows. These constellations (commingling of the female figure and the plants) invite the viewers to reconsider our relationships with all other species, and to contemplate the natural world without human domination. The sensual, soothing blue color evokes its eternal beauty.

About the Curator

Filmmaker and video artist **Rhonda Mitrani** is curator and founder of The Screening Room, Miami. For this show, Mitrani has been invited to curate a lens-based exhibition.

Run by film and video makers, The Screening Room Miami (2013) is a new-media exhibition and project space. The multi-disciplinary space is a two-time Knight Art Challenge grant recipient and is dedicated to the motion picture which includes video art, exhibitions, film workshops and lectures, and a space for filmmakers and video artists to work. The Screening Room is currently moving locations from Wynwood to Little River.

Thank You

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