

(NOT SO) STILL LIFE



ADAM BRENT
ELIZABETH BRYANT
NICOLE COHEN
ORI GERSHT
JESSICA JACKSON HUTCHINS
SUE JOHNSON
LAURA LETINSKY
BETH LIPMAN
ERIN O'KEEFE
DONNA SHARRETT
NICOLAS TOURON
MICHAEL VAHRENWALD
RODRIGO VALENZUELA
ALEX VERHAEST

APRIL 5-JULY 4, 2016

WAVE HILL
GLYNDOR GALLERY



Glyndor Gallery, once a private home, provides a compelling setting for presenting multimedia artwork that encourages a rethinking of still life in contemporary terms. A genre that gained popularity during the Renaissance and the Baroque period—and never lost its momentum—still life compositions of natural and inanimate objects were saturated with allegorical connotations. Today, artists are creating new variations that engage current cultural issues, working in photography and sculpture to conflate interior space with landscape, or using video and animation to convey still life in motion.

In *(Not So) Still Life*, several artists look directly to historical paintings, using fresh eyes and new technologies to convey the importance of observation and embedded narrative. Other artists are using materials such as ceramic, glass, fabric or 3D-printed elements to create vignettes that probe memory, ephemerality and other concerns of the traditional still life genre. A number of artists in the exhibition utilize the illusionistic technique of *trompe l'oeil* to break the boundary between two- and three-dimensional space as they explore the relationship of the genre to landscape. Revealing how artists in the show are reworking formal conventions and conducting deeper investigations into contemporary culture, the works on view demonstrate that the still life genre continues to exert a powerful hold on the artistic imagination.



ADAM BRENT

Born 1973, Queens, NY

Lives in Woodbury, CT

Small Collisions, 2016

Wood, bark, plastic, ceramic, linoleum, epoxy resin and acrylic paint
Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Slag Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Adam Brent embellishes four elegant niches in the Glyndor Gallery foyer with a suite of sculptures that contemplate the interplay between nature and culture. Kitschy animals anchor three of the compositions and a figurine of a man occupies the fourth. The protruding plastic sheet in each arrangement is positioned to suggest a plane becoming a waterfall, in much the same way a draped cloth sets the stage for a traditional painted still life. The sculptures are concocted from found ceramics and fragments of painted wood or bark, juxtaposed with 3D-printed plastic elements. Brent is always collecting ceramic, wood or metal objects from thrift stores and garage sales. He imagines the hidden narratives or the place of importance the object may have held previously.

ELIZABETH BRYANT

Born 1951, Portland, ME

Lives in Los Angeles, CA

Greenhouse/Golden Cheeked Warbler, 2012

Archival inkjet print

34" x 39 1/2"

Courtesy of the artist

Elizabeth Bryant's photographic tableaux feature found objects, photos and plants in spatial arrangements that create complex and often humorous hybrid forms. In this ongoing body of work, she constructs scenes in a variety of outdoor locations or greenhouses, using conventions from traditional still life painting. To assemble her visual compositions, Bryant arranges live plants with unclaimed student projects from the ceramics studio at California State University, Los Angeles, where she teaches, along with posters of animals and endangered species printed from image files found online. Although they look digitally altered, the setups are photographed in a straightforward manner. Bryant draws attention to how we comprehend photographic information, attempting to confer renewed value on endangered species and novel interpretations of discarded, handmade objects.





NICOLE COHEN

Born 1970, Falmouth, MA

Lives in New York, NY

Time Lapse, 2016

Video animation with audio recording of Frédéric Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2, performed by Emile Pandolfi, monitor and media player

3:00 minutes

Courtesy of the artist and Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY

Inspired by the still life painting *Fruit Piece*, 1722, by Dutch master Jan van Huysum, *Time Lapse* is a new site-specific piece created by Nicole Cohen for and in the Glyndor Gallery. Reanimating the arrangement of flowers and fruit as a moving image with the gallery's window as a backdrop, the work underscores the time-based aspect of van Huysum's painting. Throughout the course of a year, the Dutch painter rendered his organic subject matter in increments, waiting to add flowers and fruit to his compositions when they were at their prime. Cohen reactivates the painterly process as its very layers come to life, and then decay. Insects fly in and out, flowers swell in growth and fruits ripen then decay in a loop, illustrating the endless change and rebirth of the seasons as seen through the window.



ORI GERSHT

Born 1967, Tel Aviv, Israel

Lives in London, UK

On Reflection, 2014

Triptych; high-definition film for framed high-definition screens (color, sound)

5:00 minutes

51" x 114"

Courtesy of the artist and CRG Gallery, New York, NY

Ori Gersht's extensive photography and film practice explores the junctures of violence, beauty, life and death. *On Reflection* contemplates the filmic image, as well as representations and perceptions of the real. Based on Jan Brueghel the Elder's 1606 floral paintings, three video works capture an infinite, decadent moment of creation by way of destruction. Gersht's process involves recreating all three Dutch still lifes as silk replicas, placing each one within a tempered glass mirror encasement, which is then subjected to an electrical current that breaks the glass. While the opulent bouquets appear to shatter, it is only the fragmenting reflections that are captured by the camera and displayed in slow motion as three synced videos. By obliterating the edifice, Gersht explores tensions between reality and illusion, repulsion and attraction, materiality and immateriality in the continuum of contemporary *vanitas*.



JESSICA JACKSON HUTCHINS

Born 1971, Chicago, IL
Lives in Portland, OR

The Way That You Live, 2015

Acrylic on printed canvas and glazed ceramic and folding chair

58" x 65 1/2" x 3"

Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY

Jessica Jackson Hutchins is known for sculptures that combine ceramics and furniture. In recent wall-based works such as *The Way That We Live*, the artist approaches painting as a sculptor, often leaving the stretcher bars partially exposed, thereby revealing the three-dimensional structure. As with her sculptural work, Hutchins attaches household objects, like folding chairs and ceramic plates, to

her abstract canvases. By incorporating these items that we use in everyday life, Hutchins imbues her works with human emotion, memory and physicality. In creating hybrid juxtapositions, she transforms the domestic items from still life pieces into anthropomorphic expressions that are both playful and poignant. Ultimately, Hutchins explores the intimate and coexistence of art and life.

SUE JOHNSON

Born 1957, San Francisco, CA
Lives in Richmond, VA

Banqueting Table, 2007–2016

Print on vinyl, slip-cast vitreous china and found-object construction

4' x 8' x 30"

Courtesy of the artist



The *Banqueting Table* takes center stage in what was once the dining room of Glyndor House, originally the home of George W. Perkins's family, the last private owners of the Wave Hill estate. Using the iconography of consumerism and the traditions of *vanitas* and *trompe l'oeil*, Sue Johnson sets the table with a feast that epitomizes the 1950s or '60s. "Some elements silkscreened on vinyl look dimensional, while others mix found objects with ceramics that the artist constructed for the display. At the center of the table is a mountain of artificial food and McDonald's Happy Meal toys with Mr. Peanut at the summit. Like Adam Brent's work, Johnson shares an interest in appropriating kitsch. This piece is part of Johnson's *American Dreamscapes* project, which investigates the material culture of the postwar era.





LAURA LETINSKY

Born 1962, Winnipeg, Canada
Lives in Chicago, IL

Untitled #4, 2010/2011, from the series
Ill Form and Void Full

Archival pigment print on Hahnemüle paper
39 7/8" x 47 7/8"

© Laura Letinsky. Courtesy of the artist and
Yancy Richardson Gallery, New York, NY

Laura Letinsky has long been drawn to the ways in which atmosphere is constructed and space is suggested in Dutch and Flemish still life painting. She has developed multiple photography series that expand on an interest in decoration and the aesthetics of the home as a way to express identity. Letinsky pushes the idea

of illusion and perfection in the *Ill Form and Void Full* series by making provisional three-dimensional constructions with cutouts from lifestyle magazines and art reproductions. Roughly assembled in a neutral space and bathed in natural light, the scale and relationship of objects is shifted, while the form and void is accentuated. Ultimately, the still life is flattened as a two-dimensional photograph.

BETH LIPMAN

Born 1971, Philadelphia, PA
Lives in Sheboygan Falls, WI

Cut Table, 2014

Glass, wood, glue and paint
80" x 72" x 26"

Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, New York, NY

Cut Table is an opulent, baroque arrangement of candlesticks and dishes anchored by an apothecary jar. The precarious still life is barely contained by a slender, three-legged table that emerges from the wall at a skewed angle and is framed by fragmentary wallpaper, also executed in glass. It appears as though the transparent display of ghostly objects might crash to the floor at any moment. An ardent observer of the push and pull between abundance and decay in the long tradition of still life painting, Beth Lipman refers to the past stylistically, but creates an arrangement that speaks directly to the fragility of our times. The artist fabricates each individual glass object by blowing, solid sculpting, kiln forming and/or lampworking.



ERIN O'KEEFE

Born 1962, Bronxville, NY
Lives in New York, NY, and New Brunswick, Canada

Left to right:

Things As They Are #6, 2015

Archival pigment print, mounted on museum board
20" x 16"

Courtesy of the artist and Denny Gallery,
New York, NY

Grounded in the history of photography and in her architectural training, Erin O'Keefe's photographs rely on the optical illusion generated by transforming three-dimensional arrangements into a two-dimensional image plane. She uses abstraction and formalism to make images that investigate the nature of spatial perception. In her process, O'Keefe photographs painted boards and tinted Plexiglas that she has arranged into deceptively simple color compositions. By exploiting the distortions that emerge from the difference between the way that the camera captures a scene and how the eye sees it, these assemblages of geometric shapes and lines achieve a seductive combination of still life and architectural illusion.

DONNA SHARRETT

Born 1958, Medford, NJ

Lives in Ossining, NY

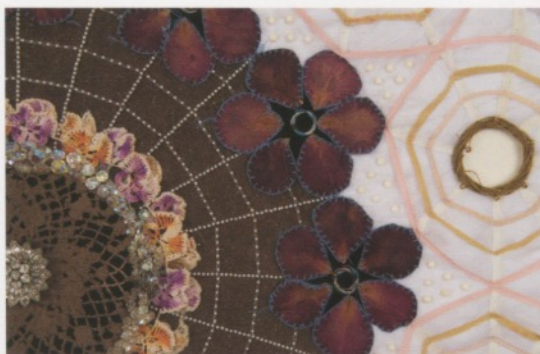
Just Breathe, 2012, (detail)

Wedding gown, strips of bridesmaids' dresses and dolls' clothes, black velvet dress, jewelry, rose petals, needlework, guitar strings, bone beads, dirt, beads and thread

36" x 36"

Courtesy of the artist and

Pavel Zoubok Gallery, New York, NY



Donna Sharrett's intensely sewn pieces represent an amalgamation of memory through layered materials and significance. These works are influenced by *memento mori*, an approach to still life from medieval times that gained popularity during the 19th century as customs surrounding mourning and death became more elaborate. Building her own interpretation of *memento mori*, Sharrett uses materials imbued with symbolism and employs a variety of needlework techniques, all of which would have been familiar to Victorian women. In the *Love Songs* series (2012–15), she uses guitar string ball ends in novel ways and the titles refers to a specific song. For instance, *Just Breathe* is by Pearl Jam. While the individual works are not dedicated to a specific individual, the series is dedicated to her brother, Scot Sharrett (1961–2001).



NICOLAS TOURON

Born 1970, Saint-Mandé, France

Lives in Brooklyn, NY

Artificial Terrain #3, 2015

Porcelain, aluminum, video and projector
5" x 5" x 10"

Courtesy of the artist

Nicolas Touron's practice is a form of visual storytelling; his multimedia works function as fables that reflect on how people experience and interpret their surroundings. His *Artificial Terrain* series

includes a small video projection filmed in the conservatory of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which the artist visits often. Fascinated by the constructed natural environment of the greenhouse, the artist created his own handmade landscapes, incorporating footage from the enclosed garden. He set porcelain-cast cicada carapaces in miniature ceramic terrains. Arranged as still lifes, each containing a video projection of macro greenhouse footage. Blurring the lines between organic and artificial, untamed and composed, Touron conjures memories of the natural amid sculptural and representational landscapes.



MICHAEL VAHRENWALD

Born 1977, Davenport, IA

Lives in New York, NY

Untitled (cup), from *Forest Floor*
(after Otto Marseus van Schrieck), 2014

Archival inkjet print

30" x 24"

Courtesy of the artist

RODRIGO VALENZUELA

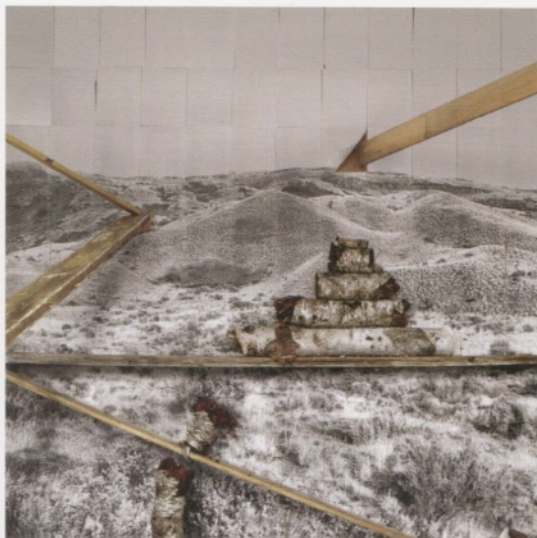
Born 1982, Santiago, Chile
Lives in Seattle, WA

Still Life No. 4, 2014

Archival pigment print and artist-made frame
43 ½" x 43 ½"

Courtesy of the artist and Upfor Gallery, Portland, OR

Rodrigo Valenzuela's *Still Life* series explores the way that images, such as landscapes and tableaux, are inhabited and how space, objects and the natural world are translated into photographs. The places depicted feel at once familiar yet distant, and appear both in and out of place, challenging the viewer to make sense of how the landscape and pictorial space are formed and situated. To complicate the process, Valenzuela's work often involves layering objects—in this case cut branches and lumber—on top of the photographic scene and then re-photographing the new compositions. Gestures of alienation and displacement are evoked by the environmental simulacrum. Ultimately, this work is a conflation of photographic records, representational objects and collective, as well as personal, memory.



ALEX VERHAEST

Born 1985, Roeselare, Belgium
Lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands

Temps Mort / Idle Times, 2013

Table Prop: Angelo

Video

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Dauwens & Beernaert Gallery,
Brussels, Belgium

Alex Verhaest investigates the nature and limits of language through visual storytelling based on unique narrative scripts, while juxtaposing painting, video and contemporary technology. On first impression, the *Table Props* resemble the 15th century still lifes of

Dutch painters Pieter Claesz and Willem Claesz Hesa. Stained tablecloths and half-eaten and crumbling leftovers at a vacant dinner table suggest a sudden or perhaps prolonged departure. Upon closer viewing, the subtle movements can be seen within seemingly still images, revealing a *tableau vivant*. Each of the *Table Props* correlates to the inner psychology of a human counterpart and character study. By rendering symbols of art historical still lifes as digital, allegorical compositions, Verhaest creates parallel worlds of a timeless nature, where memento mori is a constant echo of itself.

The *Forest Floor* series resets plant growth that the artist encounters in industrial and residential areas in New York City as traditional still life compositions. After coming across a painting by 17th century Dutch painter, botanist and entomologist Otto Marseus van Schrieck, Michael Vahrenwald began this series loosely modeled after van Schrieck's works, which illustrated candid yet illuminated observations of found botanical compositions in nature. Capturing the chiaroscuro of the staged scene through theatrical lighting, Vahrenwald brings to light the resilience of even the smallest of metropolitan weeds. Though modestly commonplace, these microcosmic patches flourish in the cracks of sidewalks, at the edge of buildings, from underneath construction infrastructure and amongst scatterings of consumer debris. Set in the foreground of their manufactured voids, each "portrait" underscores the wilderness that is modern cities.



Wave Hill

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Wave Hill is a public garden and cultural center in the Bronx overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Its mission is to celebrate the artistry and legacy of its gardens and landscapes, to preserve its magnificent views and to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education and the arts.

We are grateful to the artists for creating the works on view in *(Not So) Still Life* and to their galleries for facilitating the loans, including Marianne Boesky Gallery, CRG Gallery, Denny Gallery, Claire Oliver Gallery, Yancey Richardson Gallery, Pavel Zoubok Gallery, all of New York, NY; Slag Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; Dauwens & Beernaert Gallery, Brussels, Belgium; and Upfor Gallery, Portland, OR.

SUPPORT FOR THE VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM IS PROVIDED BY LILY AUCHINCLOSS FOUNDATION, INC., MILTON & SALLY AVERY ARTS FOUNDATION, THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST, NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE, AND BY THE CATHY AND STEPHEN WEINROTH COMMISSIONING FUND FOR THE ARTS. WAVE HILL'S OPERATIONS ARE MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY PUBLIC FUNDS PROVIDED THROUGH THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND THE ZOOS, BOTANICAL GARDENS AND AQUARIUMS GRANT PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

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Image, top:
SUE JOHNSON
Banqueting Table [detail],
2007-2016
print on vinyl, slip-cast vitreous
china and found-object construction
Courtesy of the artist

Image, front:
ELIZABETH BRYANT
*Bunting with Figs and
Peppers*, 2009
Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist