

Marilla Palmer has curated *The Hot House* in conjunction with her show, *The Wasp in the Garden*. Complementing her exhibition of mixed media botanical works, this group of artists represents a range of ways art is used to study, celebrate, and engage with nature. Not only are they inspired by nature as a whole, specific elements of nature are brought into their studios to be photographed, rendered, or used as raw materials. This intimacy, admiration, and protectiveness of these pieces of nature is reflected in the work, whether through traditional drawings or contemporary abstraction.

These works are exemplary of the shift in focus from the paintings of the Hudson River School that revered nature as sublime to humankind's modern combative relationship with it. We are a threat, and nature as we know it is unsustainable. Botanical art has always recognized the ephemerality of the natural world, but now it has the emotional weight of investigating our role in that risk, and our responsibility to the natural world of protecting it. Representing nature in art may be the only way to save it.

LC Armstrong paints imaginary landscapes with brilliant colors and shifts of scale, giving them a Surrealist atmosphere. Flowers in the foreground loom over magical realist scenes, glowing with an inherent luminosity built up with her layers of paint.

Susanna Bauer works with found natural objects and embellishes them with crochet. There is a tension of fragility and strength in her sculptural pieces; the piercing of a brittle leaf threatens it, yet it becomes both strengthened by the final construction and elevated beyond its initial state of overlooked decay.

Blond Jenny explores an intimate, even erotic, relationship to nature in her decoupage using organic materials. While florals have long been a stand-in for sexuality, her work is more explicit in its imagery.

Katie DeGroot strives to represent trees as they are — how they grow to survive and adapt to their given environment, producing contorted abstract limbs — rather than how they are typically depicted in their idealized symmetrical forms. While her paintings are grounded by observation, she lends her own interpretation of their personality by imbuing them with abstracted details.

Beverly Duncan's traditional, nearly scientific, botanical drawings represent her observations of the flora and fauna in her immediate surroundings. Each piece is rooted in a specific time and place and celebrates the interconnectedness of the natural world.

Alexis Rockman paints future landscapes that depict the threat of climate change and genetic engineering, should they be allowed to continue unimpeded. He considers his work to be Pop Art, but with natural history as his iconography.

Katia Santibañez's geometric abstraction is inspired by the fundamental elements of nature, as well as its connections to the complementary worlds of architecture and cityscapes. Organized by grids, her paintings incorporate ideas of order and power, structure and balance, chaos and control.

Fred Tomaselli creates mesmerizing patterns meticulously crafted from organic matter, pharmaceuticals, street drugs, printed materials, and hand-painted elements suspended in layers of resin. While calling to mind ancient natural artifacts trapped in amber, the hallucinatory aspect of his imagery grounds his pieces in a contemporary world.

Esther Traugot calls her hand-crocheted coverings of natural objects “bandages” or “cozies” because, while they obscure the object itself, they are also an attempt to preserve nature and prevent its decay. They add a sense of humanity to the objects, and bridges the gap between nature and artifice.

Denise Walser-Kolar's watercolor paintings savor the minute details of each botanical specimen they portray. Attention paid to the subtle nuance of color relishes in the natural beauty around us.

Natalie Colette Wood's piece from her installation, “Swallowed By Nature,” examines the relationships between home, nature, and urban environments. The foundation of her sculptures are found objects that are then overcome by natural materials like moss, succulents, and air plants to show nature reclaiming the manmade world.