

The Da Vinci Questionnaire®

Matt Wedel

Mythology At Play

by Victoria Looseleaf



Colorado-born, Athens, Ohio-based Matt Wedel – whose paintings and sculptures have been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally, and pushes the boundaries of clay, resulting in objects that recall familiar plant forms while also springing from his own imagination, while his paintings involve time and space, metaphor, and mythology – plumbs his own psychological depths only to discover what makes him love work and life.

What historical art figure would you like to have lunch with and why? I am terrified about having lunch with most people I admire. These days, it would be **Henri**

Rousseau. I imagine lunch would be particularly awkward since I don't speak **French**. Instead, I would rather spend the morning together in a conservatory, getting lost in color. I want my daughter there with us.

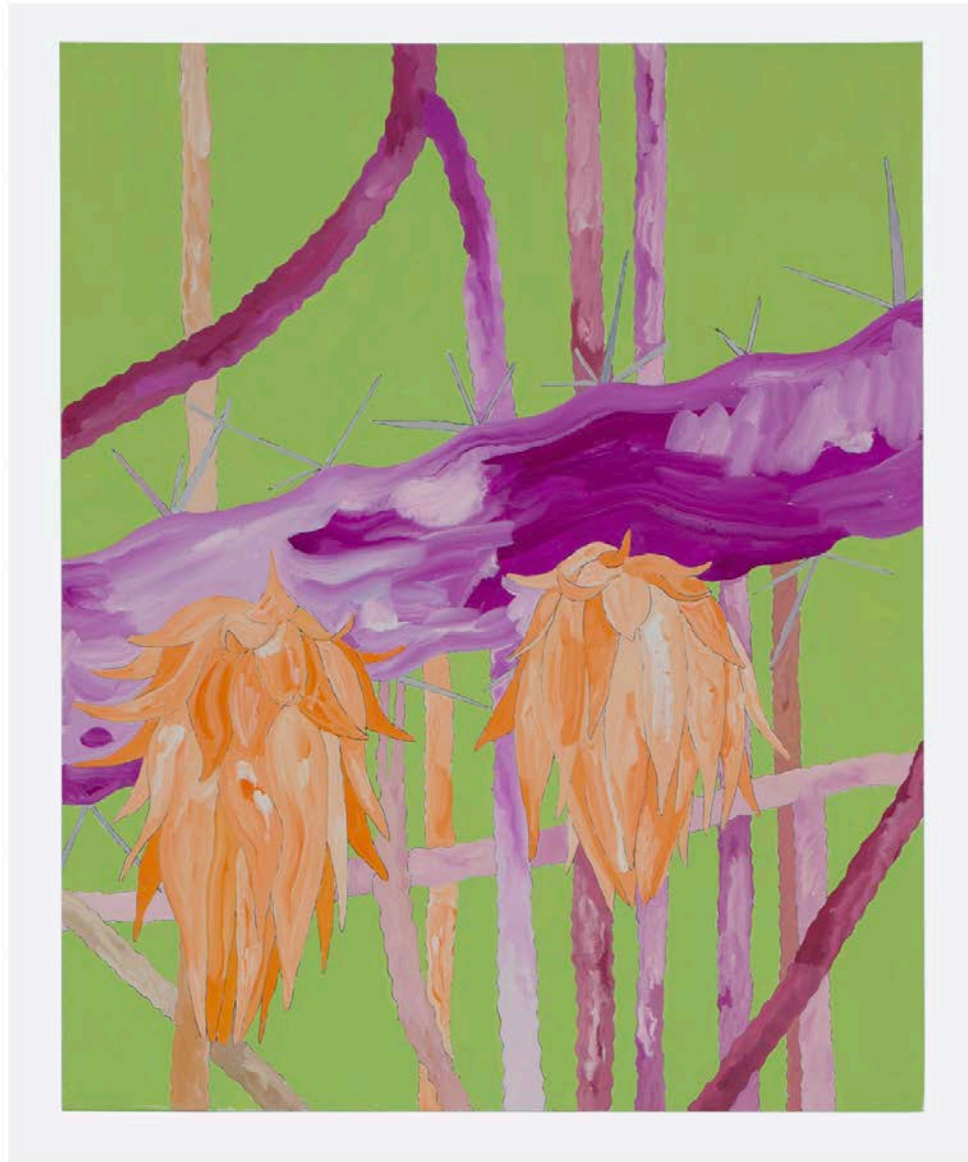
What did you purchase with the proceeds from your first sale? I used money from a sale to apply to art school. I sold a couple of vases and my 1983 **Volvo Station Wagon** for \$1000 to a drug dealer who worked on my concrete crew. Then I moved to **Chicago**, as if that was enough money to go to art school with.



Potted Plant

What words or phrases do you overuse? "Ok, so," I use that one a lot. I also use a squishing sound to describe a lot of things that I do with clay and glaze.

How do you know when a work is finished? There are multiple points within my work when I make a last gesture. When I am sculpting, when I am adding color, and when I choose to turn off the kiln. One of my favorites is when I turn off the kiln. It's as if I was the work inside of the kiln. All of the emotion and searching that took place within the object and within the color, fusing in a liquid state. I turn off the kiln, close the damper and the burner ports, and a stillness takes place. All the contrast between combustion and silence.



Flower Tree (Hawaii)

When and where were you happiest? I am grateful to have had moments where I have found the meaning of life, both inside and outside of my studio. These are indeed

the happiest experiences I have felt. The tragedy is that these images come in and out of focus. They can dissolve like sand attempting to stick to one's hands. I think we get a little closer each time this happens.

What is your most treasured possession? My vulnerability. It hurts so much that it feels like a compass. People often don't recognize the vulnerability of this ecosystem we inhabit.

Where is your ideal escape destination? My studio.



Potted Plant

What's the worst survival job you've ever had? I have a love-hate relationship with most early jobs, but working on a concrete crew kicked my ass. It was my first job

outside of high school and redefined my understanding of labor. I am still surprised I made it out alive.

What TV series from your youth best describes your approach to life? “Care Bears” and “Sesame Street,” for sure. The idea that caring is the work we need to be doing. No matter what crazy shit we get into as a kid, this kind of image sticks with you.



Flower Tree (Hawaii)

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? I would find a longstanding capacity to control my anxiety and sharpen my ability to manifest all the work I long to participate in.

What is your most treasured memory? My wife and I were able to have a home birth with our first child. It was one of the most empowering acts that I have experienced in my life and has held me up through many difficult times. We were able to work with the same midwife who delivered my wife as a baby, so there was a lot of trust and tenderness.

What makes you smile? Being in the garden, baking pies with lattice crusts, eating **Morels**, spreading milkweed seeds, opening a cooled kiln to find something I have never seen before.



Flower Tree, 2014; photo by Jeff McLane.

What makes you cry? I am sad that the world is veering into dark places. I cry because I love my children so much. I cry because I love the idea that we can evolve fast enough. I cry because we are our own prophets searching for the capacity to speak.

What is your go-to drink when you toast to a sale? Whiskey on ice.

After an all-nighter, what's your breakfast of champions? Marshmallow cereal.



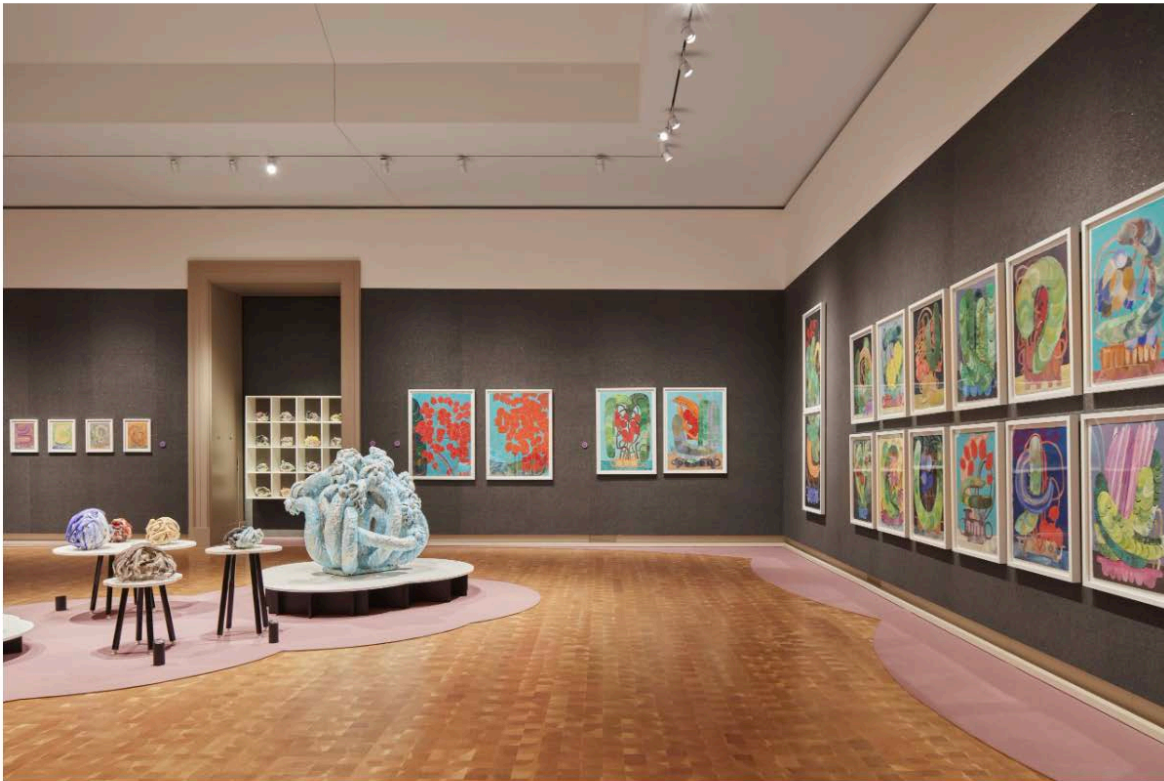
Flower Tree, 2022; photo by Jeff McLane.

Who inspires you? My children are the foundation of my whole world. The other day, during my residency in Honolulu, my daughter Eleanor ushered me outside to see an image she had found in a giant palm tree. When we looked up, she pointed out the most realistic face emerging from the gnarled palm trunk. She had found a guardian outside of our studio.

What's your best quality? I am not afraid to say I am wrong to my children.

What's your biggest flaw? I think that others can understand what I am thinking.

What is your current state of mind? Terrified and totally excited. I feel like an exposed nerve.



Installation view, *Phenomenal Debris* @Toledo Museum of art; photo by Matthew McNulty.

What do you consider your greatest achievement? To still be alive.

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what would it be? A chemist, a wildlife conservationist, or a nurse.

***Pictures in the Garden* is at LA Louver, October 24, 2023 – January 6, 2024.**

Cover image: the artist in his studio, photo by McKinley Law, courtesy of L.A. Louver; all images courtesy LA Louver. unless otherwise noted.

Visit the artist at his [website](#) or on [Instagram](#).

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