

Flora And Fauna Make The Summer At LA Louver

Tom Teicholz Contributor 

I'm a culture maven and arts enthusiast.

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We're now in the long days of summer, enjoying the familiar pleasures of the season that feel like something we used to enjoy long ago B.C. (before Covid) – which is why the timing couldn't be better for The Flower Show at [LA Louver](#), curated by Elizabeth East, on view until September 1, which is certainly my favorite show of the summer.



The Flower Show at LA Louver, installation view
PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERT WEDEMEYER, COURTESY LA LOUVER

The exhibition features the work of more than 50 artists, a diverse and wide-ranging assemblage of artists from the 19th Century such as Pancrace Bessa, Adolphe Monticelli; the 20th Century such as Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin, Ana Mendieta, and Luis Gonzalez Palma); and artists still making vibrant work in the 21st century including David Hockney, as well as the first exhibited artwork of noted architect Thom Mayne. Drawings, paintings, sculptures, it is a garden of delights. Many of these artists have been generously lent to the show by fellow gallerists in NY such as Pace Gallery in NY, Galerie Lelon, Rossi & Rossi in Hong Kong, Shulamit Nazarian, Shoshana Wayne, Craig Krull, Peter Fetterman, Rele Gallery in Los Angeles, Stephen Ongpin in London, Five Car Garage in Santa Monica, and the studios of artists such as Hockney, Patrick Martinez, Tom Wudl, the Don Suggs Estate, among many, many others.



Thom Mayne XCD_20230223_091025_189, 2023 UV ink on aluminum

I cannot do justice to all the great work on exhibit, but I highly recommend looking at Elizabeth East's [online catalogue and essay](#) before and after seeing the show.

Among the vibrant works are Patrick Martinez's diptych *Monterey Park/East LA Bougainvillea*, a Hockney iPad drawing of a vase with flowers, a gorgeous Astrid Preston, *Giverny Garden* (2008). The exhibition is rich with beauty and the inventiveness of artists taking on the same subject in so many ways and variations.



The Flower Show at LA Louver, installation view
PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERT WEDEMEYER, COURTESY OF LA LOUVER

Among the sculptures that particularly struck me were Tony Matelli's *Weed* (2023), a sculpture of a plant sprouting from the crack between wall and floor in the gallery, Zemer Peled's gorgeous cobalt blue plates, Tony Berlant's printed tin work, Amir H. Fallah's sculpture *Forgive and Forget* (2022), and a 1947 limited edition copy of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* illustrated by Henri Matisse and a small bronze sculpture by Deborah Butterfield of one of her signature horses but with flowers emanating from within the form. There

are even gorgeous forms by Dale Chihuly that remind one of how he made glass into Art.



Adolphe Monticelli, Vase de Fleur PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE COURTESY LA LOUVER

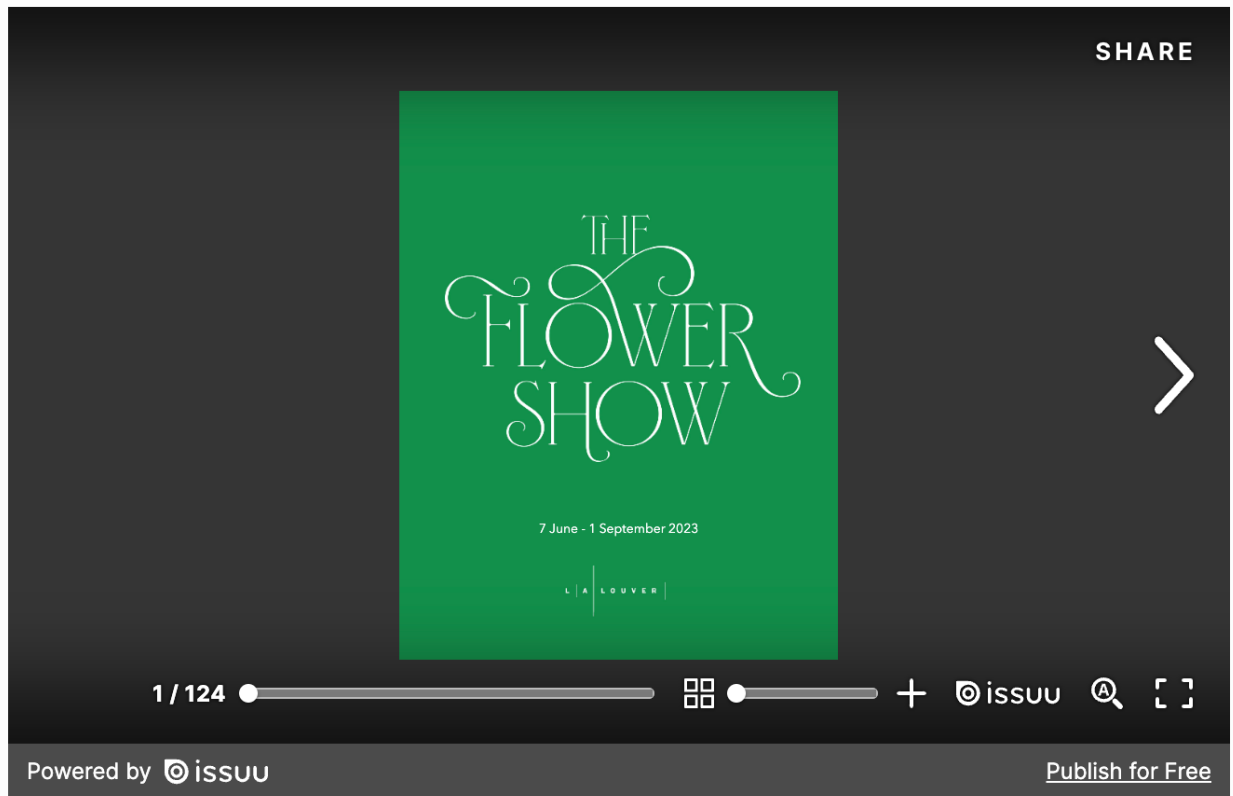
What is it about flowers that so beguiles us? There is, of course, the natural beauty, and the very evanescent way in which flowers bloom and die. There is the symmetry of some, and the asymmetry in others. There is the hint of the spiritual, even the divine, and the very earthy way in which certain flowers conjure the female. Artists have recognized this, from Fantin-Latour to Van Gogh and Georgia O'Keefe, and more recently, Robert Mapplethorpe, taking what was at first thought of as merely decorative and making them the subject of their artistry.

I was raised as a city boy and I confess to never taking to botany in any respect. However, I am not insensate to the hold flora and fauna have on so many (it is after all one of the most popular hobbies in the United States). And like an invasive species, or creeping ivy, I have been noticing how much the natural world has moved to the foreground in contemporary arts and culture.

For me, this realization began with Richard Powers' novel, *The Overstory*. Without giving too much away, the spectacularly unique achievement of this novel is making the ecology in the story as sentient and primary as the human characters. For the first time, I had an appreciation for the philosophical and even legal arguments of this cause's activists.

Similarly, I was taken with Kehinde Wiley's portrait of President Barack Obama and the way Wiley used the flowers and flora in the portrait as signifiers. Increasingly artists are using the natural world that often remained in the background as foreground.

I thought of this when seeing the wonderfully textured paintings of Nijdeka Akunyili Crosby at the David Zwirner Los Angeles (the exhibition regrettably just closed). I was particularly taken with a recent painting of hers of a mother and child sitting in the backyard where the foliage is in the foreground of the painting. It is as if the leaves themselves had something to tell us, a feeling that existed in much of her work.



Back at *The Flower Show*, we see this in paintings that appear as portraits but where the flowers add another dimension to the people we are looking at, such as the works by Glenn Hardy, Jr., or in Vanessa Prager's *Golden Hour* where the flowers bloom in place of the person's face, or Alison Saar's *Black Eyed Susan*, as beautiful as it is defiant and political.



Rebecca Campbell *Where Have You Been My Blue-Eyed Son?* 2023 PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERT WEDEMEYER, © REBECCA CAMPBELL,

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There is also Rebecca Campbell's painting *Where Have You Been My Blue-Eyed Son?* Which is filled with Dylan-esque allusion to carrying emotional burdens, Eileen Cowin's photos *Seemingly Without End*, a moment of hope in the darkness. And the grieving image of a dead flower in Kathy Moss' *Afterlife*.

And after visiting LA Louver, you can also head to Bergamot Station to see the complementary exhibition of *The Flower Show* at Peter Fetterman Gallery,

including Marc Riboud's iconic image of a Vietnam War protester offering a daisy to the riot police standing before her; Cig Harvey's *Red Dahlia* that for me conjured Fantin-Latour; Brigitte Carnochan's gorgeous *Hydrangea*.

It's been a long winter, and Fall may be no better, but a visit to *The Flower Show* reminds us of how Flowers and Art can inspire, elevate, and remind us of the creativity that exists in every season.

LA Louver, 45 North Venice Blvd, Venice, CA 90291. Summer Hours: 7 Jun - 1 Sep 2023, 10am - 6pm, Monday - Friday.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomteicholz/2023/08/03/flora-and-fauna-make-the-summer-at-la-louver/?sh=2f6f015a6ef6>