

Rachael Catharine Anderson

Selected Press

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OBSERVER

ARTS

Five Things to Do in New York's Art Scene June 12-16

From live music to film screenings to Old Masters returning home, these are NYC's hottest art happenings that don't require an invite.

By [Dan Duray](#) · 06/12/23 11:02am

Welcome to Things to Do, our weekly roundup of happenings in the ever-buzzing New York art scene. Here, we present an expertly curated list of the best goings on that don't require an invite—but might require that you reserve a spot in advance. Be sure to check StubHub, SeatGeek and Craigslist for ticketed events that may have sold out. People in the art world are often double-booked and love secondary markets.

Wednesday June 14th and Thursday June 15th

'Party Girl' 4k Restoration Screening



'Party Girl.' 1995. USA. Directed by Daisy von Scherler Mayer. Courtesy of Photofest

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd St., various times

Though it's not about art explicitly, the new 4k restoration of 1995s cult classic *Party Girl* is screening at MoMA this week, and it's a must watch for those in or adjacent to the art world, where sometimes it's hard to know if the parties support the culture or vice versa. [Parker Posey](#) delivers her best non-Chrisopher Guest-directed performance in this love letter to a bygone downtown New York directed by Daisy von Scherler Mayer.

Wednesday June 14th and Friday June 16th

yunè pinku at the Sonic sphere



A rendering of audiences walking into Sonic Sphere in The Shed's McCourt space, 2023. Courtesy The Shed

The Shed, 545 West 30th Street, 10 p.m.

For the summer, The Shed at Hudson Yards has built a 65-foot-diameter spherical concert hall suspended in the air in the venue's 115-foot-tall McCourt. It's designed for "immersive, 3-D sound and light explorations of music by boundary-pushing artists." Things kick off this week with shows by yunè pinku, praised by *The Guardian* for her "rare ability to warp 30 years of rave culture into melodic new shapes, with hints of Radiohead, psych and hyperpop."

Thursday June 15th

Opening: "a signal urgent but breaking"



Phoebe Little. 'Like Salt on a Snail,' 2023. Oil on linen. 121.9 x 152.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Perrotin gallery, 130 Orchard Street, 6-8 p.m.

If you've skipped Art Basel this week—and if you're reading this feature, odds are good that you have—you can still get a preview of the next big names in art at Perrotin's show of the Yale MFA Painting and Printmaking Class of 2023. These artists are sure to go on to great things, and the show's press release, written by one of the program's co-teachers, promises a strong unifying theme: "Emerging into a post-pandemic cultural landscape, the cohort reminds us of the profound lessons learned since 2020: to dig deep roots and hold as precious our immediate worlds; to value the exploration and expression of self, extracted from conventional routines and institutional systems; and to recognize the vital need to care intensely about those who navigate these precarious times with us."

Thursday June 15th

Opening: "THE DELICATE THINGS THAT GIRLS DO"

Vir Bonus Dicendi Peritus —
I hear *father* in the word
fodder—But only *other* in the word mother—
(I know the bottom; I am the
bottom) — A steady hand leads
me down — Tell me, is it winter ?
I am not
unfamiliar with this half-life — I am
sliding up and down a razor's edge —
I hear my
daughter's voice in the next room —
Tell all the truth but tell it pink —
I am here in an
observational capacity, Don't Mind
Me — I wait outside on a bench —
While mother hums an old union song —

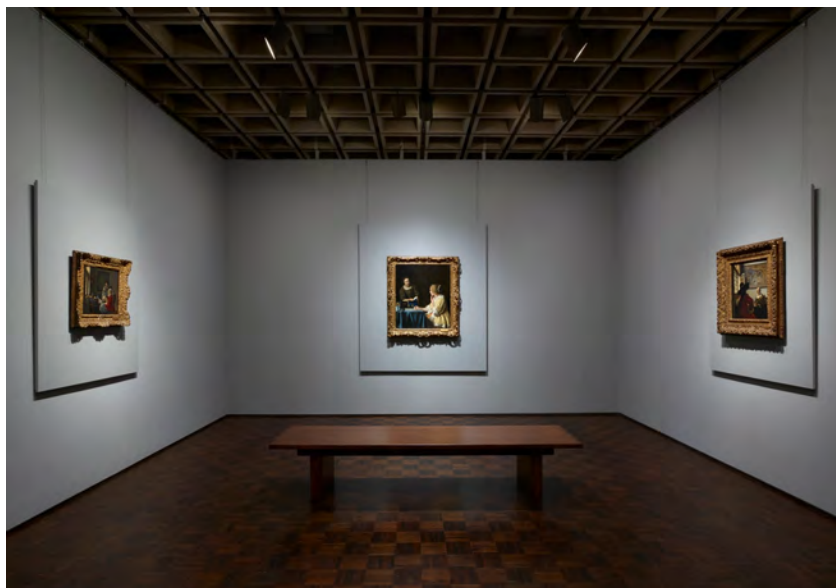
Rachel Libeskind, 'The good man, skilled in speaking,' 2023. Courtesy signs and symbols

signs and symbols gallery, 249 East Houston St., 6-8 p.m.

Taking its title from a Jenny Holzer piece, *Untitled (A Real Torture Would...)*, from *Inflammatory Essays*, 1979–1982, this all-female group exhibition features the work of Rachael Catharine Anderson, Sarah Anderson, Shaqayeq Arabi, Annabel Daou, Ornella Fieres, Karen Finley, Jeewi Lee, Rachel Libeskind, Linder, Pola Sieverding and Ann Weathersby. The show concerns what it means to be a woman and an artist at the same time. A REAL TORTURE WOULD BE TO BUILD A SPARKLING CAGE WITH 2-WAY MIRRORS AND STEEL BARS, the Holzer piece begins.

Thursday June 15th

Return of the Vermeers: New Insights on Three Masterworks



Three paintings by Vermeer (from left, 'Girl Interrupted at Her Music,' 'Mistress and Maid,' and 'Officer and Laughing Girl') as shown at Frick Madison by The Frick Collection. Photo: Joseph Coscia Jr.

Frick Madison, 945 Madison Avenue

There are only 35 works attributed to the Dutch Master Johannes Vermeer, and the recently closed landmark show at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam brought together 27 of them. Should you have missed that show, you can puff your chest with some local pride and visit the three Vermeers in the collection of the Frick when they are placed on view back home this week. Welcome back, *Officer and Laughing Girl*, *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*, and *Mistress and Maid*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for its part, loaned *Young Woman with a Lute* and *Allegory of the Catholic Faith*, to be back on view soon.

Have an upcoming event that may be worth our readers' time? Drop me an email at artnews@observer.com.



The delicate things that girls do

15 Jun — 29 Jul 2023 at the Signs and Symbols in New York, United States

20 JUNE 2023



THE DELICATE THINGS THAT GIRLS DO, installation view, June - July 2023. Courtesy of signs and symbols, New York

signs and symbols is delighted to present *The Delicate Things That Girls Do*, a group exhibition featuring artists Rachael Catharine Anderson, Sarah Anderson, Shaqayeq Arabi, Annabel Daou, Ornella Fieres, Karen Finley, Jeewi Lee, Rachel Libeskind, Linder, Pola Sieverding and Ann Weathersby.

Taking its title and inspiration from a pastel pink poster in Jenny Holzer's incisive series *Inflammatory Essays* (1979–1982), the exhibition brings together eleven women artists spanning multiple generations, nationalities and mediums of choice. Whether embracing, rejecting, ignoring or inverting the gendered expectations they face, each participant offers an answer to the question of what it means to be a woman, an artist and both at the same time.

*A real torture would be to
Build a sparkling cage with
2-way mirrors and steel bars.
In there would be good-looking
And young girls who'd think
They're in a regular motel
Room so they'll take their
Clothes off and do the
Delicate things that girls do*

*When they're sure they're
Alone. Everyone who watches
Will go crazy because they
Won't be believing what they're
Seeing but they'll see the bars
And know they can't get in.
And, they'll be afraid to
Make a move because they don't
Want to scare the girls away
From doing the delicious
Things they're doing.*

(Jenny Holzer, Untitled (A Real Torture Would...), from Inflammatory Essays, 1979–1982)

Rachael Catharine Anderson (b. 1990 Columbus, Ohio) is a 2022 MFA graduate from the Painting and Printmaking program in the Yale School of Art. She makes oil paintings that explore the aesthetic dimension between human and otherworldly interactions. Her work displays elements of enchantment and the surrealist dreamscape that follows in the legacy of artists such as Agnes Pelton, Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini. She focuses on the uncertainty, wonder and fascination that ecology and cycles of growth and decay inspire. In the fall of 2023, Anderson will have a solo exhibition at signs and symbols. Her work has previously been shown in Milan and the US including Jeffrey Deitch Gallery in New York. Her paintings are also included in major private collections in the US and Europe. She currently lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut.

Sarah Anderson engages in a broad interdisciplinary investigation integrating various media and research areas while remaining focused on sculpture as a specific field of inquiry. Her questions are negotiated through queerness as a mode of generative translation — a method of appropriating systems like minimalism and abstraction to tell stories about being a body that desires, destroys and is damaged. The work explores the violence and desire that flows between an internalized sense of self and its varied physical personas. The purpose is to make objects that point a viewer towards a more complicated subjective relationship to 'things' in the world through formal, spatial and narrative means. She holds a BFA in Glass from Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania. She has attended residencies internationally, including Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Maine), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace (New York), A.I.R. (Brooklyn), KinoSaito Arts Center (New York), Mana Contemporary BSMT (Jersey City), La Escuelita (Nicaragua) and CanSerrat (Barcelona). Her work has been exhibited at galleries institutions such as LaMama Galleria, Abrons Art Center, The Wallach Gallery at Columbia University, Nurtureart, Helena Anrather Gallery, A.I.R., signs and symbols and Vox Populi. Anderson is a Brooklynbased artist.

Shaqayeq Arabi (b. 1974 Tehran, Iran) is a painter, sculptor and installation artist. She was born in Tehran and divides her time between her hometown, Dubai and New York City. Arabi's work finds its point of departure in image, sound and smell, as well as the sensitivity of the surrounding environment. In sketching, composing and connecting accumulated fragments together, Arabi traces her reminiscences, creating a tangible and touchable reality out of the emotions and sensations. Arabi received her Bachelor in Graphic Design from Al-Zahra University, Tehran, a BFA from University of Valenciennes, France and an MFA from Sorbonne University, Paris. She has had exhibitions in the Middle East, North America and Europe — notably Roots, Total Arts, Dubai; Study of an Upturned Ziggurat, Dept. of Signs and Symbols, New York; and Bits And Pieces: Collages And Assemblages, Shirin Gallery, New York.

Annabel Daou's (b. 1967 Beirut, Lebanon) work takes form in paper-based constructions, sound, performance and video. Daou suspends, carves out or records the language of daily life: from the ordinary or mundane to the intimately personal and urgently political. In her performance work she explores questions of trust, intimacy, cross-cultural exchange and the operations of power. Her work frequently evokes moments of rupture and chaos but with the tenuous possibility for repair. Daou was born and raised in Beirut and lives in New York. Daou's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally including at The National Museum of Beirut; DG Kunstraum, Munich; Arter, Istanbul and Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede. Recent solo exhibitions include Declaration at Ulrich Museum of Art, Global Spotlight: Annabel Daou at Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington and Only If at signs and symbols, New York. Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, Flash Art, Artnews and Canvas Magazine. Public collections include The Baltimore Museum of Art; The Vehbi Koç Foundation, Istanbul; The Ulrich Museum of Art; The Warehouse, Dallas, The Morgan Library and The Yale University Art Gallery. Recent residencies include the Pollock-Krasner award at ISCP in New York and Haus Des Papiers in Berlin. In 2022, Daou's sound installation Declaration was on view at the Ulrich Museum of Art in Wichita, Kansas, after the Museum acquired the work for its permanent collection in 2021.

Ornella Fieres's (b. 1984 Frankfurt, Germany) work explores the hidden aspects of digital technologies. For her investigations she develops photography, video and sound techniques that forcefully merge analog and digital material. Fieres works with photographs and documentary film material from the turn of the 20th century – a time that was characterized by a fascination of occultism in combination with technology – and processes the found footage with experimental methods. Fieres uses self-built apparatuses, autonomous algorithms, tweaked software or artificial intelligence to create moments that carry lingering traces of the past and might be foreshadowing events in the future. Fieres's multimedia installations have been exhibited internationally at The Centre Pompidou in Paris, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Goethe Institut Toronto, Literaturhaus Berlin, NurtureArt Gallery New York, Kunstverein Speyer and Fotografie Forum Frankfurt. She has given lectures and presentations at Volksbühne Berlin, Haus am Lützowplatz Berlin, Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach and at New Lab New York, where she had a research residency in 2017. In the fall of 2024, Fieres will have her third solo exhibition at signs and symbols.

Karen Finley is an artist, performer and author. She is an interdisciplinary artist working in performance, visual art, sound, poetics, film and video, installation, public and social practice art. Born in Chicago, she received her MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. Her raw and transgressive performances have brought debate and controversy; Finley was the named plaintiff for the Supreme Court case *Finley v. NEA* that challenged the decency provision in government grants to artists through the National Endowment for the Arts. Her performances and visual art have been presented internationally such as at The Barbican in London, Lincoln Center, New York City, MOMA PS1 and the Bobino in Paris, amongst others. Finley is interested in freedom of expression concerns, social justice, visual culture, gender and sexuality, art education, metaphysics and lectures, and gives workshops widely. Her most recent work is a new performance *Covid Anxiety Vortex Opera Kaleidoscope Kitty Disco* (2023). She is the author of nine books, including her latest, *Grabbing Pussy* (OR Books 2018) and the 25th anniversary edition of *Shock Treatment* published by City Lights. A recipient of many awards and grants, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, Finley is an Arts Professor in Art and Public Policy at New York University.

Jeewi Lee (b. 1987 Seoul, South Korea) is a Berlin based artist whose multidisciplinary practice – spanning sites-specific installations and interventions, video and image series – examines memory, time and decay. Important for her work are the performative marks and imprints of the every-day, collecting and preserving “the trace” as a pictorial element and recorded archive of lived social and historical events. She questions the sphere of visual perception through drawing attention to the unnoticed, the disregarded and the seemingly non-existent. While traces appear in abstract and minimal form, they contain indexicality and narrative elements; trace (physically and conceptually) exists as residues of past lives, recalling the passage of time; a visual allegory for lived experience – of history, place, memory and the body. Lee studied painting at the Berlin University of the Arts and at Hunter College University in New York. She graduated in 2014 as a master student in Fine Arts at the University of the Arts Berlin and held her MFA in 2018 in the postgraduate study Art in Context. She has received various grants and artist residencies, including Villa Romana Florenz, grant from the CAA, artist residency Thread from the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation, artist residency in Jerusalem at Al Ma´mal Foundation and the scholarship from the Kunstfond Foundation. Recent solo and group exhibitions include Kunstverein Hamburg; Korean Embassy, Berlin; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; and Sculpturepark Schlossgut Schwante.

Rachel Libeskind (b. 1989 Milan, Italy) is a multidisciplinary artist whose research-based practice examines the construction of history and the enduring power of images. Working across collage, installation, video and performance, Libeskind appropriates and recontextualizes images in order to disrupt imposed boundaries – between the personal and public, ancient and contemporary, societal and cultural – and reveal unexpected parallels. Libeskind has presented solo exhibitions, installations and performances at Center for Jewish History, New York; Watermill Center, Long Island; Pioneer Works, Brooklyn; Bombay Beach Biennale; and Mana Contemporary, Miami. She has also been included in group exhibitions at institutions such as ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; Alabama Contemporary Art Center, Mobile; Baker Museum, Naples, Florida; Carpenter Center at Harvard University, Cambridge; and National Media Arts Festival of Lithuania, Vilnius. She has been awarded residencies and fellowships at Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, Kaneohe; The Watermill Center, Long Island; Long Road Projects, Jacksonville; and The Scuola di Grafica, Venice, Italy. She holds a B.A. with honors from Harvard University. In 2023, Libeskind was included in Phaidon Press's book *Vitamin C+*: Collage in Contemporary Art, the latest installment in the series of 'Vitamin' books. In 2024, Libeskind will be the subject of a solo exhibition at Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University, Alabama, which will coincide with her third solo exhibition at signs and symbols. Born in Milan and raised in Berlin, Libeskind is now based between New York and Germany.

Linder (b. 1954 Liverpool, UK) is a British artist who is internationally renowned for her photomontages, performances and radical feminism. Linder's work has been exhibited widely, including recent solo exhibitions at Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (2020); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK (2020); Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, UK (2018); Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK (2018); Art On The Underground, London, UK (2018); Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, Scotland (2018); Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA (2013); Tate St. Ives, Cornwall, UK (2013); Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2007); and MoMA PS1, New York, NY (2007). In 2021, Linder was included in the Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, UK. *Femme/objet*, her comprehensive retrospective, traveled from the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France to the Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, Germany (2013).

Pola Sieverding (b. 1981 Dusseldorf, Germany) is a visual artist working in the field of lensbased media. With photography, video and sound, she investigates the physical body as bearer of historical narratives that shape a contemporary discourse on the social body. By defining the body linguistically as an alternative to words, she exploits the classical ideal of the body as locus of pleasure and power. She is attracted to extremes and socialized emotions, something felt when the body switches between looking and being looked at, touching and being touched. Her images explore the body as an expressive element, the way we alter our behavior when we feel ourselves to be acting, a performance of just being. Sieverding studied at the University of the Arts Berlin, CMU Pittsburgh and Surikov Institute Moscow. She was a visiting lecturer to the Academy of Art Palestine in Ramallah and an assistant professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich from 2016-2020. She has received a number of grants including a DAAD travel grant in 2008 and the Arbeitsstipendium by the Senat of Berlin in 2014. She has exhibited internationally at Art in General, New York; documenta 13, Kassel (with Natascha Sadr Haghghian); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (with Orson Sieverding); Lumiar Cité, Lisbon; Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; Dubai Photo Exhibition, Dubai; NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; and MAK Museum für Angewandte und Gegenwartskunst, Vienna. Sieverding lives and works in Berlin.

Ann Weathersby is a multidisciplinary artist who investigates how experiences of gender and sexuality intersect with popular culture to generate intimate personal mythologies. She utilizes ephemera, photography, text, glass, textiles and collage to consider representation and the spectrum of memory, especially in relation to the powers of image culture, language and nostalgia. Her work has been exhibited at Anthology Film Archives, New York; Chicago Cultural Center; Clamp, New York; Echo Park Film Center, Los Angeles; F, Houston; Foley Gallery, New York; Fortnight Institute, New York; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; and Winter Street Gallery, Edgartown. Her work has been featured most recently in Artforum, F Magazine, and Musée Magazine. She holds an MFA from Yale University.



Signs and Symbols

Signs and Symbols is a contemporary art space grounded in performance. The gallery presented performances in New York and internationally. The space serves as a curatorial platform and multi-disciplinary incubator bringing together diverse mediums to stimulate dialogue and creative connections.

[Place profile](#)

Location
New York, United States

Founded in
2012



1. Karen Finley, *The Uterus Is None of Your God Damn Business*, 2023, giclee archival print on 100% cotton paper, 11x8.5 inches paper size, 9x6 inches image size, Edition of 15, © Karen Finley; Courtesy of signs and symbols, New York.
2. Rachel Libeskind, *Naked girls enjoying a boat trip*, 2023, printed color aid sheet in artist frame, 9.25x6.5 inches, unique. © Rachel Libeskind; Courtesy of signs and symbols, New York
3. Rachael Catharine Anderson, *Dancing*, 2023, oil and marble dust on canvas, 21x17 inches, framed. © Rachael Catharine Anderson; Courtesy of signs and symbols, New York



Sothebys
INSTITUTE OF ART

May 15

Rachael Catharine Anderson

Rachael Catharine Anderson paints from observation, recording interactions between ephemera. Anderson's main artistic influence is her unique upbringing on a small apple orchard and flower farm in Ohio, where she trained her ability to discern the subtleties of organic form, change, and interconnectedness.



Rachael Catharine Anderson. Image by Sarah Wonderling.

For more of Anderson's work, visit her [website](#) or [Instagram](#).

Anderson was always drawn to creative pursuits, even as a child. As she got older, she began experimenting with a variety of materials, like metalwork, sculpture, photography, moving images, and painting. Anderson calls each phase of experimentation a “creative love affair,” conveying her genuine pull toward all things artistic. She studied painting and drawing at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. She then received her MFA at Yale University, where she concentrated on traditional oil painting from observation.

Anderson cultivates this particular aspect of her process by documenting how light, colour, space, form, pattern, and time interact with objects like those she used in a still life or found in her garden. To her, these exchanges of minutiae open up a new aesthetic sphere. The wholly physical process of observing the textures of these relationships feels contemplative to Anderson, and she often finds herself consumed by the objects of her focus. She especially leans into the uncertainty generated by natural relationships, the idea that anything might irreversibly change at any moment.



Red Branches, 2023. Oil on canvas. 157.48 x 132.08 x 3.81 cm. All artwork images courtesy of the artist and signs and symbols gallery, New York.

Looking Glass (2023), *Compost Clock* (2022), and *Red Branches* (2023) were all created from still life arrangements in Anderson's studio and outside her driveway in New Haven, Connecticut, where Yale is located. Carefully chosen, the objects all investigate the configuration of stacked objects in space and direct the viewer to consider the structure of the things that surround them. Specifically, the crimson of the branches in *Looking Glass* and *Red Branches* lends the otherwise ordinary twigs a miraculous quality, removing them from their natural context. Details like these allow Anderson to explore strangeness and moments in paintings that get lost in translation. Her compositional approach verges toward surrealism, yet her works' asymmetry clearly demonstrates the link they share with the natural world.



Looking Glass, 2023. Oil on canvas. 60.96 x 45.72 x 3.81 cm.

Time is also a crucial component of Anderson's work. In *Looking Glass*, the mirror serves as a vessel for time travel, facilitating the extension of an object's life throughout time. In many of her works, we decipher forms in various states of blooming and decay. Therefore, Anderson's artwork inhabits a distinct temporal plane where multiple phases of an object's life cycle exist at once. In *Compost Clock*, for example, an apple trails throughout the earthy levels of the painting, fluctuating between eaten and uneaten. Anderson's perceptive skill is as much a subject of her work as the objects she records and the inspiration of her upbringing.



Compost Clock, 2022. Oil on canvas. 182.88 x 208.28 cm.

Anderson created *Green Spectral Entry* (2022) with the concept of time in mind, charting the visual development of a tangle of plants on the side of her neighbour's house over one month. The resulting work is a journal of the plants' evolution, chronicling each leaf and branch as it changed over the month. Anderson also aimed for a ghostly overtone in the piece, achieved through the clouding of paint in areas throughout the canvas and the silhouette-like quality of the white leaves compared to the green.



Green Spectral Entry, 2022. Oil on canvas. 182.88 x 182.88 x 3.81 cm. Photo by Etienne Frossard.

Anderson encourages her viewer to appreciate the everyday, to look harder at the objects that compose our quotidian lives that we may take for granted. Along with the influence her upbringing has on her production, she also looks at Old Masters like Leonardo and Juan Sánchez Cotán, John Singer Sargent, and the Pre-Raphaelites. She is particularly drawn to the Pre-Raphaelites' depiction of space, relationships between non-humans, and, notably, their painting methods from observation. Anderson is also compelled by the rich colours of Fra Angelico, mirrored in her current colour palette of cobalt blues, iron oxides, crimson, green, and cadmium red.

Her artistic future will involve drawing more human figures, emphasising intimacy between the human body and the biosphere. Anderson works between her studio and the flower farm she grew up on, creating a distinctive brand of still life that reflects her many inspirations. She is represented by signs and symbols on the Lower East Side in Manhattan, where her work was on display in the recent show *Bouquets* from March 30 to April 29. She will have her first solo exhibition at signs and symbols in November 2023.

Gabriella Hetu

Emerging Artist Co-Editor, MADE IN BED

The Yale Herald

ARTS

Looking to the Ground: An Interview with Rachael Anderson

February 27, 2022 · by elizabethlevie



Illustrated by Catherine Kwon

The canvas looks like it's covered in constellations, or mold. To achieve this patterning, Rachael Anderson (ART '22) bathed the canvas in oil paint floating on water. The canvas is big, approximately 130" by 96", and I struggle to imagine her lifting it and laying it onto the water. "It's light," she insists, "like a kite."

The tender care of bathing a painting is similar to the care Rachael shows to the subjects of her work. "I'm fascinated by these things that are of the ground, that are so beautiful. My work is about the overlooked."

She shows me a semi-abstract painting of ivy. It brims with life, but also feels chaotic, as though the plants are competing for space. The painting was made in her driveway, where she observed the foliage that had situated itself outside her neighbor's house. She tells me, "This was about everything all together. Different, yet not separate." Within this community of plants there is violence, too. "These are Norway maples that are invasive to the area. They're taking over, but are mixed with the native ivy. Plus," she adds, "green is the most toxic paint you can buy. It's made with chlorine and copper."

Most of Rachael's work depicts the natural world, though by her telling, everything is the natural world. She painted a tire to show that what is industrial is not separate from what is natural. "Rubber comes from a plant but has been processed into this *thing*. And we can think of plastic as really processed, violated chemicals that come from plants. The oneness is important to me."



Tangle and Winter Branches, Rachael Anderson

Rachael is taller than I expected. She wears a swirling gray wool cape and practical black running shoes. Her tone shifts between curious, incredulous young person and still, solemn prophet. She grew up on a farm in Ohio, where her parents were rewilding the land that they lived on. She has fond memories of growing flowers and arranging them into bouquets to be sold. This relationship to

land is at the core of her work. When I ask about her spiritual background, she tells me, “Earthiness is my language.”

Throughout our conversation, language often fails. Rachael repeatedly breaks into laughter mid-sentence. Sometimes it’s soft and a bit sheepish, other times it’s alive with delight. She’s surrendered to the absurdity and wonder of making art, and to the impossibility of ever really putting what her work is about into words. “The problem with art is that it’s about being misunderstood.” She bursts into laughter again. “You either make really didactic art that’s highly legible, or you’re true to your own vision. It’s impossible to express yourself. You try, and it’s always a failure.” Yet, despite the impossibility, she tries again. “That’s the artist’s task.” We keep talking.

Presence, maybe, is a way of understanding that doesn’t require words. Rachael views painting from life as a “philosophy of being there with these things, and recognizing them. Or at least recognizing their inscription on my body.” She’s currently painting chicken parts—a broken eggshell, a spinal bone, other bones I cannot identify, all arranged on a piece of foam in her studio. “I’m interested in how the way they look is a kind of language, and in how the way our bodies are structured is a kind of language. It’s morbid, but life is pretty morbid.”

When I ask about the difference between painting and photography (Rachael does both, as well as sculpture), she tells me that painting is closer to the real thing because it expresses time and space and the artist’s inner world in a way that photography cannot. She pauses, thinking. “Painting is about presence; photography is about memory.”

Rachael’s work feels grounded in the earth—in processes of decay and decomposition, in the materiality of mold and mulch and plant matter—and, simultaneously, otherworldly. In one painting, twisted branches emerge from layers of pink and orange mist. It feels ephemeral and ethereal, almost like a

dream. Next to the canvas sits the branch itself, propped up in the corner and large enough to be a tree in its own right. “That’s where mediation comes in,” she tells me. She gestures at the canvas. “That’s not the tree. That’s my imagined tree, even though I’ve looked at something directly. That’s where my inner world comes in. However true to the subject I try to be, it’s filtered through my body. I’m at once communicating my experience of the object and the object itself. It’s about me communing with these other things.”



Moon Tire, Rachael Anderson

I must admit that I have some stake in our conversation. I’m drawn to the natural world, and to art, and to art that depicts the natural world. I want to believe art has a place in counteracting the climate crisis, that this kind of work has purpose.

which is covered in veiny purple patterning. “I thought, *how do I compromise the automobile industry in an image?* Make it have varicose veins. Make it look like it’s ephemeral. But I don’t know yet how art can help... I have an inkling that being there with the stuff that’s in trouble could at least inspire someone else to care about it, too. If I care enough, maybe that care will be expressed to somebody like you, or to somebody else. But I don’t want to be so delusional about it. I want to be very grounded. That’s why I paint things on the ground.”

She thinks more. “Sometimes I mention the beauty of the natural world, and ‘natural’ is in quotes, because everything is natural. But there are certain ecologies that are in danger. Like us. And everything else. Perhaps beauty could play a role in making people care, but maybe the beauty has to be dangerous beauty. I think about apples being heavily sprayed in pesticides. They’re toxic, basically, but they’re so beautiful.”

You can find more of Rachael’s work on Instagram: [@rachaelcanderson](#).



A detail of *Compost*, Rachael Anderson