

Natura Viva
Flora, Fauna, and Us

Natura Viva:

Flora, Fauna, and Us

Published in conjunction with
The 7th International Encaustic Conference
Curatorial Program
and the exhibition
Natura Viva: *Flora, Fauna, And Us*
Juried by Debra Claffey
Hosted by **ArtCurrent Gallery**
53 Bradford Street
Provincetown, Massachusetts
June 2013

All images © individual artists 2013
Preface © Debra Claffey 2013
Essay *Heady Abundance and Spare Elegance* © Joanne Mattera 2013
Designed by Debra Claffey
Cover images:
Top Row: Nancy Azara, Tracey Adams, Marty Ittner, Christine Aaron
Center: Fanne Fernow, Michele Thrane, Jane Allen Nodine
Bottom: Kay Hartung, Marilyn Banner, Debra Claffey

Table of Contents

Preface	7
Essay by Joanne Mattera	9
The Artists:	
Christine Aaron	10
Tracey Adams	12
Nancy Azara	14
Marilyn Banner	16
Debra Claffey	18
Fanne Fernow	20
Kay Hartung	22
Marty Ittner	24
Jane Allen Nodine	26
Michele Thrane	28

Preface

Creating, curating, and organizing this exhibition has been transformative. With much help and advice from the Seventh International Encaustic Conference Curatorial Program, namely Joanne Mattera and Cherie Mittenthal, I was able to put together a show of work that was inclusive of abstraction, narrative, and representational approaches to art-making and which extended our experience of working with wax.

These ten artists approach their content and form with a sensitivity to the organic line and the biomorphic arrangement of forms, patterns, and color. Biology grows on a fractal line. Leaf patterning and veining, tree formation, hives, and shells all have a mathematical description to their form. It can be enormously intriguing to mimic, recreate, and in a sense, relive the form through line and color in that fractal way, using the organic growth of a wavering line and meandering color.

This is an exhibition that moves beyond the usual incorporation of plants and flowers in wax. These works are not predominately about the materials used, though the materials are integral to the content. I was looking for, and found, work that used flowing line and native patterning, but also strong content that bespoke the integral connective life that is flora and fauna and us—not us as separate from the natural world, but us reconnected as parts of the natural world itself.

—Debra Claffey

Heady Abundance and Spare Elegance

Debra Claffey is a working painter who exhibits widely throughout New England. She's also the owner of a thriving garden-care business, a seasonal endeavor that brings her into intimate contact with the earth and what springs from it. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Claffey invites the garden into her studio to create lush abstractions that reference the contours of leaves and vines with her observations of sunlight and plant biology.

The exhibition she has curated here, *Natura Viva: Flora, Fauna & Us*, is a splendid example of what happens when an artist is afforded the opportunity to stretch conceptually beyond her own studio practice. Claffey selected nine other artists, each of whom is inspired by the botany of the natural world, to participate in an exhibition in which micro meets macro and heady abundance is leavened with spare elegance.

Natura Viva is a project of the International Encaustic Conference, which takes place each year in Provincetown the first weekend in June. Through our Conference Curatorial Program we encourage artists to conceive and propose an exhibition that reflects their own aesthetic while engaging other artists in a conceptual and visual conversation. Largely through Conference co-producer Cherie Mittenthal, who is an integral member of the creative community at the tip of the Cape, we are able to pair each selected curator with a gallery that responds to the curatorial theme, while supporting the curators with the benefit of our own curatorial experience.

In choosing the vibrancy of the living garden—the very opposite of still life—Claffey has curated an exhibition of energy and growth, a lovely metaphor for the burgeoning interest in the medium of wax paint, which inspired The Encaustic Conference and the many exhibitions and projects that have branched out from it.

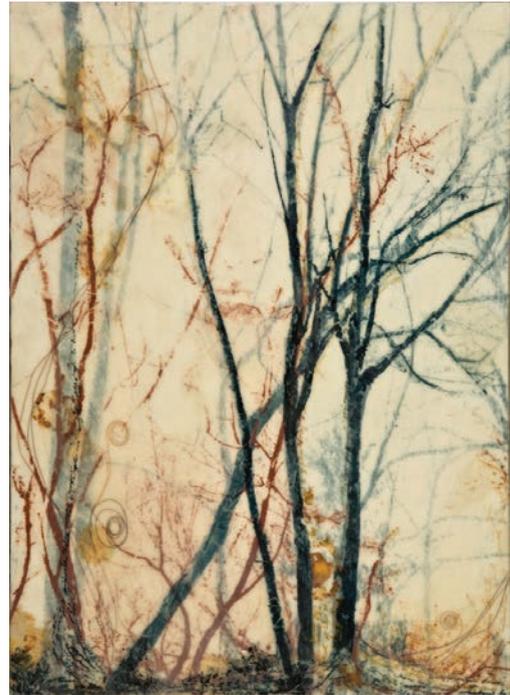
—Joanne Mattera
Founder/Director, The International Encaustic Conference

Christine Aaron

www.christineaaron.com

My work focuses on themes of memory, loss, the inexorable passage of time, and the fragility of human connection. The imagery of trees drives these themes. Trees mark time; they serve as a metaphor for the cycle of life, symbols of dormancy and growth, strength and renewal.

Trees hold the record of their lives in their rings. These inner marks remain hidden from view, the way that humans hold within the physical, mental and emotional marks of personal experience.



Clockwise from above:

Tree Muse, printmaking, horsehair, encaustic on board, 24" x 18", 2012

Sulphur Branch II, printmaking, encaustic on patinated copper, 24" x 18", 2010

Escape, printmaking, rust print, encaustic on patinated copper, 12" x 24", 2011

Promise, printmaking, encaustic on board, 24" x 18", 2010



Tracey Adams

www.traceyadamsart.com

I keep fragments of discarded drawings, prints and scrolls as a source to indulge my love of creating collages. The resulting fragments inspire endless hours of puzzle work, challenge, and intrigue.

I live on the central coast of California where organic shapes abound in the form of tree limbs, kelp and sea life. Everywhere I turn, there is something to stimulate me visually.

The elements of music are deeply embedded in me, appearing in composition, line, spatial relationships, and color.

Clockwise from top left:

Collage 3, *intaglio, encaustic monotype, drawing, encaustic, 18" x 13", 2011*

Collage 4, *intaglio, encaustic monotype, drawing, encaustic, 13" x 18", 2011*

Collage 7b, *intaglio, encaustic monotype, drawing, encaustic, 18" x 13", 2011*

Collage 14, *intaglio, encaustic monotype, drawing, encaustic, 13" x 18", 2011*



Nancy Azara

www.nancyazara.com

In these paintings, leaves become a metaphor for myself. They are layered, traced, pressed, dragged, smeared, and poured onto different surfaces using wax, sometimes paint, and at other times, added wood chips. As a “stand in,” self portraits, life portraits, their layers record a journey of memory, images and ideas.



clockwise:

Floating Leaf, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 7" x 5" x 1", 2012*

Solitary Leaf in Oval, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 8" x 8" x .5", 2012*

Rhododendron with Chip, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 10" x 8" x 1", 2012*

Almost Tondo Pink Flower, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 10" x 8" x .5", 2012*

Single Leaf, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 5" x 4" x .5", 2012*

Delicate Pink Leaf, *paint and encaustic on canvas, 10" x 8" x 1", 2012*





Marilyn Banner

www.marilynbanner.com

The initial inspiration was the striking pink/lavender dots of color climbing up the trunk and across the branches of a redbud tree in early spring. As the season progressed, I was captivated by the heart-shaped leaves, the way they tilted, the variations in size, the delicacy of their line and gesture. I called them “heartleaves,” and wanted to paint in layers all the seasons of the tree; the line of the branches, the overlapping leaves, the way the seed pods looked later on in the fall, the way the dots of color seemed to float before they opened into full blossoms. And the way it felt to have my eyes in very close, and then far away, the light blue sky.



clockwise from above:

Spring #4, encaustic on wood, 12" x 12", 2009

Heartleaf 3, encaustic on wood, 12" x 12", 2009

Pink, encaustic on wood, 12" x 12", 2009

Spring #3, encaustic on wood, 12" x 12", 2009

Spring #1, encaustic on wood, 12" x 12", 2009



Debra Claffey

www.debraclaffey.com

My subjects are often plants and everyday objects from my life, arranged to accentuate their varied forms and shapes in complex compositions. I think of them as orchestrations of light and dark, shape and rhythm.

The biology, fractal design, and stunning beauty of plant systems are what keep me coming back to these forms again and again. I don't see nature and mind as separate. I am Nature, the world around me is Mind. I am biological, corporeal, physical. Nature—the trees, earth, living beings—is consciousness, awareness, intention. We are all energy in constant change and movement.

I work with oil, encaustic, and graphite on panels or print-making paper, layering translucent paint and collecting a narrative from the history of marks made and taken away.

Clockwise from top left:

Still Life Foliage, encaustic, oil, pigment stick, graphite, litho crayon on paper on panel, 24" x 24", 2013

Seeded, encaustic, oil, pigment stick, graphite, litho crayon on paper on panel, 20" x 20", 2013

Currents, encaustic, oil, pigment stick, graphite, litho crayon on panel, 24" x 24", 2013

Cut Crystal, encaustic, oil, pigment stick, graphite, litho crayon on paper on panel, 24" x 24", 2013



Fanne Fernow

www.fannefernow.com

My work is prayer and meditation. It includes ideas from the many places where I find it, not from any specific religion or doctrine. “Rite of Spring” is a metaphor about the wonder of the fresh green plants emerging from a rich soil. It is a meditation of hope about all that is new and starting fresh—the miracle of creation.

The painting is made by creating layers of two colors and then using a hot tool to extract shapes from the top layer to reveal what is underneath.

Prayers for the Earth: Rite of Spring #3,
encaustic on panels , 24” x 48” diptych, 2013



Kay Hartung

www.kayhartung.com

I have been looking at electron microscope photographs and am inspired by the abstract organic shapes and intense color of this hidden world. I imagine the energy and interactions that go on in the body and the mind to produce action and thought. I am exploring the connections between science and art; conscious of the profound effects that these minute biological forms have on the universe.

This series of encaustic work, loosely based on observation of biological structures, explores the interconnections of these cellular forms. The process builds layer upon layer suggesting growth, development and movement.

Clockwise from top left:

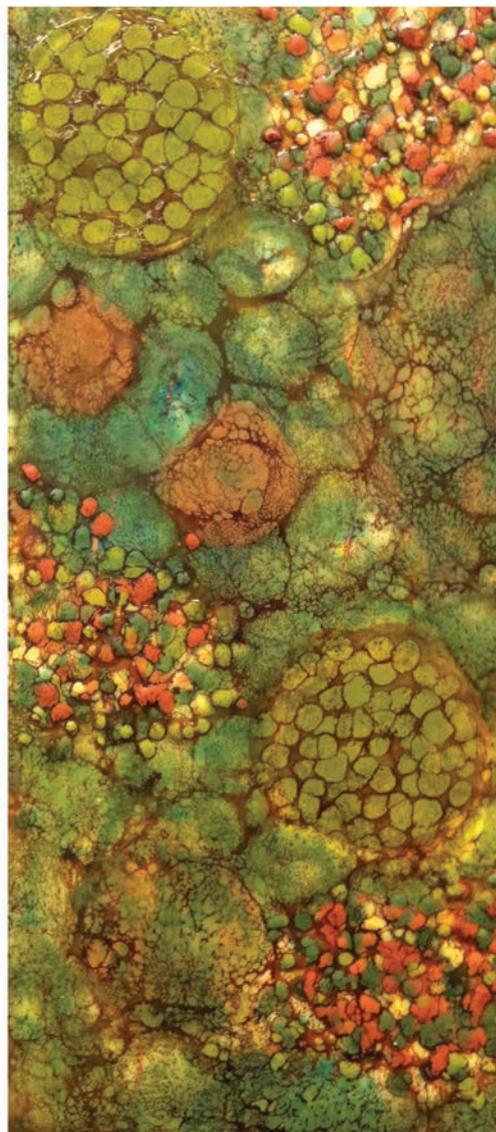
Cellular Interactions 1, encaustic and mixed media, 22" x 10", 2013

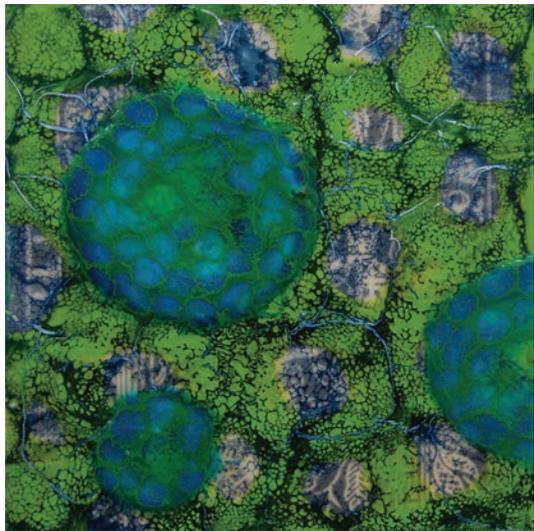
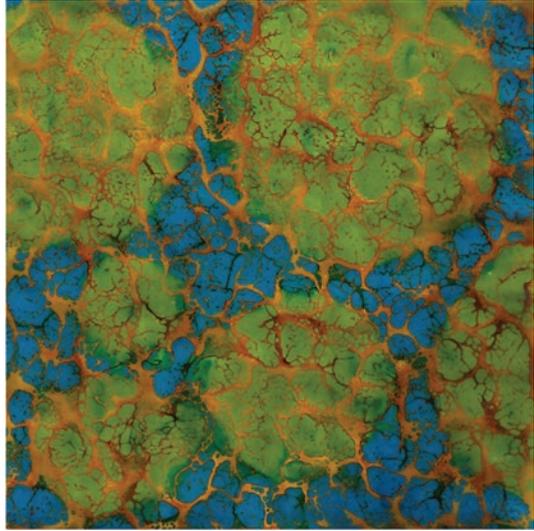
Cells Surfacing 2, encaustic and mixed media, 8" x 8", 2013

Cells Surfacing 5, encaustic and mixed media, 8" x 8", 2013

Cells Surfacing 3, encaustic and mixed media, 8" x 8", 2013

Cells Surfacing 4, encaustic and mixed media, 8" x 8", 2013





Marty Ittner

www.m-caustic.us

GHOST

The legs of a ghost crab echo the graceful curves of an ancestor's handwriting.

FIVE POUNDS

How do I reconcile being both a birdwatcher and a foodie? Underneath the beauty and the feathers, duck—specifically Peking-style with the pancakes, scallions and hoisin sauce—could qualify as my last meal. I cannot explain the awful paradox of food encased in a sentient, sensational wrapper.



From left:

Ghost, encaustic collage with screenprints and ephemera, 7" x 10", 2012

Five Pounds, encaustic collage triptych with screen prints, ephemera, encaustic paint, 24" x 8", 2013



Jane Allen Nodine

www.janenodine.com

I gain inspiration from a variety of sources including nature, popular culture, history, and by all means, living and working in the South. Currently I am working on a body of image-based pieces that parallel an abstract series of patterns and textures inspired by natural aging, transformation, and processes of oxidation.

Both series are driven by cultural and historical sources, with an emphasis on memory as related to record, trace elements, or the vestige of some past activity. The non-objective abstractions incorporate naturally occurring marks and patterns made from iron oxidation, with burn marks, and monotypes pulled from various surfaces. The patterns and marks are applied to panels between layers of paper, pigment, and encaustic wax. As the layers develop, some elements become obscured in the hazy film of the wax, as others become more evident and appear to float or come forward in the luminous properties of the material.

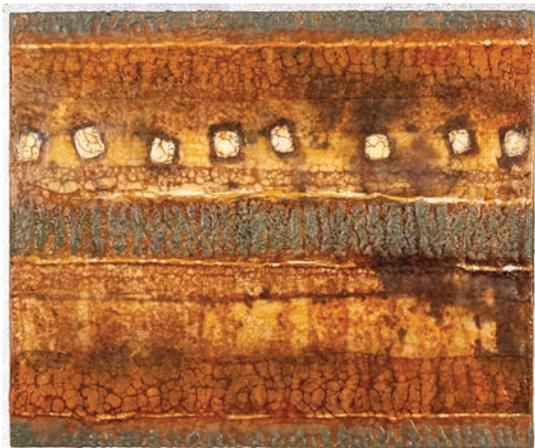
Clockwise from top left:

Terra ignota.02, 20 X 24", encaustic wax, pigment, resin, iron oxidation, tea stain on muslin on panel, 2012

Terra ignota.01, 21.5 X 18.5", encaustic wax, iron oxidation, graphite, resin, pigment on panel, 2012

Venetian Lace.17, 24 X 24", encaustic wax, iron oxidation, resin on panel, 2011

Venetian Lace.14, 24 X 20 X 2", encaustic wax, oil pigment, resin, iron oxidation on paper on panel, 2011



Michele Thrane

www.michelethraneart.com

My work captures the repetition that underlies the profuse variation of life that displays itself on the Serengeti, whether in the zebra's stripes or the cheetah's spots. Joined together with staples in a regular, repeating fashion are encaustic pieces that reflect memory fragments of my trip to that exotic Tanzanian plain.



From left:

Mount Meru, encaustic monotypes, staples, paper, 2" diameter

Grumeti River, encaustic monotypes, staples, paper, 23" diameter

Serengeti Colors, encaustic monotypes, photographs, staples, paper, 26" diameter



