

Art Now L.A.
May 1, 2020

Group Show: 'To Bough and To Bend'
Nature Provides a Respite
Bridge Projects
March 11- June 27, 2020

by Jody Zellen



To Bough and To Bend is a large group exhibition curated on the subject of trees. The exhibition takes its point of departure from a poem by Mary Oliver (“*When I Am Among Trees*”) and focuses on the hope and positive energy of nature. While Los Angeles is a city bordered by mountains and the ocean and filled with blooming gardens and towering palm trees, it is also a concrete jungle — a criss-crossing of intertwining freeways filled with speeding cars.

The works in *To Bough and To Bend* span many media including painting, sculpture, photography, video and virtual reality. Tim Hawkinson’s *Sebastian* (2015) and Billy Joe Miller’s *Shasta Wreath* (2020) are different takes on the fate of trees. Hawkinson pieces together two large branches cut bare bisected by many hand-made wooden arrows whereas Miller (in collaboration with Nathan Weick and the Bureau of Land Management have) created a wreath and ash circle spanning 100 inches using remains from the Carr fire.

Breathe, (2020) is an evocative sepia-toned film loop that simulates the dynamics and motions of breath using branches, light and shadow. Among the photographic works are Amir Zaki’s large-scale color pigment print, *Identical Twins* (2020) depicting two entwined trees against a white background; Todd Gray’s *Bamboo Hood*, (2019) a collage of three separately framed color photographs mounted on top of each other of lush African swamps juxtaposed with a hooded sculpture in a garden; as well as Ken Gonzales-Day’s, *Two men were taken*, (2007) that depicts two trees at the rural California site of a lynching many years ago.

Zoe Crosher’s bronze cast from the series *LA-LIKE: Prospecting Palm Fronds*, (2017) are scattered throughout the gallery replicating the ever-present palm fronds that fall to the ground in LA’s windstorms. Gil Delindro’s *un measurements #3*, (2020) amplifies the sound of a hollowed out, rotating tree stump as it passes four prepared transducer microphones, instilling a sense of nature’s power and awe. Lucas Reiner’s black and white etchings, *Fifteen Stations* (2010) illustrate the grace and personalities of isolated trees through varying textures of line, whereas Ben Sander’s *Bonasi* (2019) marker drawings are colorful, quirky, cartoony representations of Bonsai plants.

The installation feels uncrowded and spacious despite the fact that there are more than 30 artists included. The range of works is vast and wandering through the exhibition is a revelatory experience. It is interesting to think about how these diverse artists incorporate aspects of nature into their works. For some, trees are stoic and revered, for others they are sites of trauma and racial tensions. Trees can be mystical and magical. They are comforting, protective and aesthetically inspiring. In these stay-at-home days of isolation, nature provides a respite and even looking out a window to see leaves blowing in the wind can offer a glimmer of hope.

<https://artnowla.com/2020/05/01/group-show-to-bough-and-to-bend>