

ANGELA PIEHL

ARTIST STATEMENT

Through my work, I question preconceived notions of nature and beauty and I ask viewers to consider the relationship between accumulation and the feeling of alienation from nature. My approach is decoratively abstract, and the bouquet-like arrangements found in my compositions function as metaphors as well as resembling creatures and forms from nature. I incorporate a hybridization of aesthetic orders: synthetic and organic, flora and fauna, and bodily and constructed forms.

Perceptions of gender are also addressed in my work, as are notions of queer ecology. Queer ecology, an interdisciplinary field of study in which distinctions such as natural/unnatural are considered as well as connections between the material and cultural aspects of environmental issues, is an appealing area of exploration for me. This conceptual focus provides the context for my employment of images and photographs of idealized beauty, both fabricated and natural. I conglomerate elaborate yet abstracted elements, which results in strange new forms and environments that are bound together through tenuous and categorically "unnatural" forces.

My images function as creature-like arrangements, or alternately, spaces that can be read in diverging ways. I layer and layer to the point that areas within each composition have a baroque density. The resulting environments and creatures born from this process are grotesque, bouquet-like, and somewhat lurid. They are monstrous, yet delicately fragile and lovely--living, yet ambiguously dormant. Producing this work allows me to investigate multiple layers of meaning: potential, promise, quiescence, mortality and isolation among them.

Images I collect often contain synthetic representations of nature and natural beauty, and this artifice or irony is also layered throughout my work. It is through beauty that the range and use of my reference material, from organic matter to opulent embellishment, that the connections between accumulation and alienation from nature are most apparent. The resulting visual ambiguity is an invitation for the viewer to decipher the source material. The viewer is asked to question preconceived notions about nature and beauty, and acknowledge the complex realizations that such questions can evoke. I invite the audience to actively look at and categorize what they see for themselves and ultimately to consider their relationship to the natural world.