

New England Now: Strange States

Large Format Labels

Bottom Floor: Colgate Gallery

Pizzagalli Center for Art and Education



Brief Introduction to this Guide:

Welcome to **New England Now: Strange States**, which is on special exhibition in the Colgate Gallery on the bottom floor of the Pizzagalli Center for Art and Education. The exhibition room is a large rectangular space with one small video screening room to the left. One bench is located in the middle of the room. To follow this guide step-by-step, first notice the exhibition's introductory wall text to your right [the full text of this introduction comes next in this binder]. Upon entering the main room, immediately turn right and continue counterclockwise around the main wall unless a deviation from the path is otherwise noted. At the end, you will exit through the same original doors.



[View of the Exhibition Introductory Wall Text]

New England Now: Strange States, Exhibition

Introductory Wall Text

New England's weatherbeaten coastline, dark and deep forests, and craggy mountain ranges shrouded in gloom have long been fertile ground for the mysterious and macabre. The unforgiving and harsh elements helped shaped a psyche where reminders of one's mortality are never far away.

A rich tradition of ghostly folklore, supernatural phenomena, and eerie legends immortalized in the poetry of Edgar Allen Poe continues to haunt and captivate our imaginations today from enclaves like Salem, Massachusetts, to the chilling prose of Shirley Jackson and perennially popular horror

stories of Stephen King. These tales intertwine seamlessly with the region's landscape, weaving a tapestry of fright, intrigue, and allure that continues to captivate and inspire.

New England Now: Strange States features twelve regional artists whose artwork ignites the imagination and opens portals to parallel worlds. Using a rich array of mediums and techniques, from multilayered paintings to site-specific installations, their artwork embraces the otherworldly while remaining grounded in topics of mythology, environmentalism, ideals of beauty, transformation, and gender and cultural identity. In conversation together, the artworks in **Strange States** present a varied and exhilarating dreamscape, providing

visitors with new tools and perspectives for exploring the complexities of our reality, our humanity, and ourselves.



[Installation view of works by Lauren Fensterstock]



Lauren Fensterstock (Portland, Maine, b. 1975–)

Untold Worlds, 2024

Graphite and ink on paper, vintage Bohemian
crystal, mouth blown glass, and shark tooth

Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, New York



Lauren Fensterstock (Portland, Maine, b. 1975–)

Scrying 3, 2017

Shells, resin, sand cast, mouth blown glass, paint

Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, New York



Lauren Fensterstock (Portland, Maine, b. 1975–)

Portal, 2018

Shells, glass, aluminum, and mixed media

Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery, New York

Lauren Fensterstock's multimedia artwork explores the intricate relationship between humanity and nature, laying bare our futile quest to control and confine the natural world. Repurposing found objects such as shells and glass and using resin and black paint, she builds dark, intoxicating gateways to fantastical landscapes seething with energy.

Here Fensterstock employs reflective black glass as a dual-purpose lens, offering a unique vantage point for introspection into both internal and external

landscapes. Drawing inspiration from historical optical tools like Claude glass and scrying mirrors, she navigates the boundary between observing the outdoors and connecting with the metaphysical. In **Untold Worlds**, Fensterstock's hand mirrors bridge these realms, introducing an element of self-reflection. Notes, drawings, and other small objects capture her journey of charting her cosmic and earthly reality. "The self is not isolated," she reflects, "but an entangled part of our environment. Sometimes what is right before our eyes feels as distant as the stars, while the furthest reaches of the cosmos seem to warm our skin."



[Installation view of works by Emilie StarkMenneg]



Emilie StarkMeneg (Harpswell, Maine, b. 1984–)

Star Kiss, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist



Emilie StarkMeneg (Harpswell, Maine, b. 1984–)

Iris Spring, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist



Emilie StarkMeneg (Harpswell, Maine, b. 1984–)

Nebubliss, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Emilie Stark-Meneg's paintings pulsate with energy; her vibrating compositions blur the boundaries between emergence and obfuscation. The interplay of scale, sinuous forms, and layers of paint burst forth in neon hues, captivating and almost overwhelming the senses. Yet beneath the vibrant façade lies a complex narrative exploring themes of connection, mortality, and transformation.

Stark-Menneg fearlessly delves into her subconscious, weaving memories and dreams together into sprawling acrylic collages. “I believe in imagination,” the artist says. “That’s the root of experimentation for me.” Figures levitate between color masses, suggesting transformation and the ambient passing of time. In **Iris Spring**, the oversized irises dominate the semi-translucent figure, who is in the rowboat adrift in fog, diverting attention and creating an unsettling dissonance for the viewer. **Star Kiss** and **Nebubliss** present the ethereal connection between mother and child as an otherworldly or celestial bond.



[Installation view of works by Arghavan Khosravi]



Arghavan Khosravi (Stamford, Connecticut, b. Iran
1984–)

Confinement, 2020

Acrylic on linen canvas over wood panels and wood
cutouts

Courtesy of Teddi and Scott Dolph



Arghavan Khosravi (Stamford, Connecticut, b. Iran
1984–)

Flying Away, 2021

Acrylic and cement on cotton canvas over wood panels and chain

Courtesy of Teddi and Scott Dolph



Arghavan Khosravi (Stamford, Connecticut, b. Iran
1984–)

Glass Ceiling of Underground World, 2018

Acrylic on linen and cotton canvas on wood panel

Courtesy of Teddi and Scott Dolph

Born and raised in Tehran, Iran, Arghavan Khosravi began her artistic journey in the United States in 2015 while attending graduate school at the Rhode Island School of Design. Drawing on the traditions and visual elements of Persian miniature painting and Surrealism, Khosravi's often-sculptural paintings present seemingly disparate narratives. "This blending of Eastern and Western imagery, past and present, religious and secular, reality and

fantasy, is symbolic of my deeply felt psychological tension.”

The perplexing dualities within Khosravi’s paintings reflect her own prior experience living under an oppressive regime, what the artist refers to as her “double life.” In Iran, she adhered to Islamic law while in public while also experiencing a freer existence in private. In her paintings, women are the protagonists, transcending geographical boundaries and rejecting victimhood. Through the exploration of freedom, agency, and exile, the women’s identities become symbols of resilience and strength.

**[Suggested path: At the corner, turn left to observe
the large sculpture next]**



[Installation view of works by Bianca Beck]



Bianca Beck (Portland, Maine, b. 1979–)

2021

Wood, wire, papier mâché, acrylic and oil

Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Uffner Gallery,

New York

Bianca Beck's figurative sculptures feature multiple or hybrid forms entangled in motion and pulsating with vibrant energy. Covered in gestural strokes of bold, fluorescent colors, the sculptures proudly wear their painting in defiance of categorization, as embodiments of self-actualized identities. Larger than the average human, with bold colors and outstretched limbs, Beck's sculptures fill space and command attention. While the sculptures evoke a sense of improbability in their precarious balance

and movement, the unity of multiple forms conveys a greater strength.

Beck draws on the Greek philosopher Plato's The Symposium, an origin myth of love and sexuality, which posits that humans, once of double-form, seek reunification with our other halves, which could be any of multiple gender identities. The artist aims to “convey the feeling of being doubled or enlarged through partnership when we become something greater than ourselves.” Whether standing alone, as in this gallery setting, or in a group, as installed outdoors, these sculptures amplify acceptance, gender fluidity, and community.

View more of Beck's work outdoors.



[Installation view of works by Safarani Sisters]



Safarani Sisters (Boston, Massachusetts, b. Iran
1990–)

Emerge, 2024

Oil on canvas and video projection

Courtesy of the artists

Interdisciplinary artists and identical twins Farzaneh and Bahareh Safarani collaborate fluidly to create multi-layered art that defies categorization. Their distinctive video paintings merge choreographed performances with figurative oil paintings, animating their subjects and environments. In **Emerge**, a female figure navigates interior spaces, her interaction with the outside world mediated by windows and curtains, giving her control over her exposure. Blurring boundaries between artists and

art, this inquisitive character embodies the sisters' experience as Iranian women living in the United States and yet the figure maintains a unique narrative of her own as an independent woman.

Emerge challenges viewers to confront social injustices and envision a future of equality and empathy. "Through her silent suffering, she desires for a world where justice is not merely an abstract concept, but a tangible reality," the sisters explain, "where empathy guides our interactions, and where every individual is afforded dignity and equality."



[Installation view of works by Tara Sellios]



Tara Sellios (South Boston, Massachusetts, b.1987–)

Sketch for Lux (after Saint Lucy), 2023

Pen and paper

Courtesy of Tara Sellios



Tara Sellios (South Boston, Massachusetts, b.1987–)

Reliquary for Lux (after Saint Lucy), 2024

Mixed Media

Courtesy of Tara Sellios



Tara Sellios (South Boston, Massachusetts, b.1987–)

Lux (after Saint Lucy), 2024

Chromogenic photograph

Courtesy of Tara Sellios

Throughout human history, images of mortality serve as stark reminders of life’s precious fragility, a theme, also referred to as “memento mori,” famously explored in 17th-century Dutch and Flemish still life paintings. Embracing this tradition, Tara Sellios creates striking images teeming with beauty and intricacy intended to seduce viewers, only to discomfort them with grotesque imagery and solemn narratives revolving around themes of morality, mortality, and transformation. Her photographs inhabit the space between life and

death, often featuring unsettling elements like skeletal remains and desiccated insects.

In her series “Ad Altiora Tendo [I strive for higher things],” Sellios reimagines and illustrates religious and historical martyrs. While “exploring the concept of suffering and sacrifice leading to transformation and transcendence,” she focuses on Saint Lucy, patron saint of the blind whose name means light. In Sellios’s portrayal, **Lux (after Saint Lucy)**, the martyr holds her eyes along with the instrument of their removal, now displayed in a **Reliquary for Lux (after Saint Lucy)**, symbolizing her virtue and defiance against aggression.

[Suggested path: Turn left to observe two objects on pedestals and one work at the top of a column]



[Installation view of works by Sarah Myers Brent]



Sarah Meyers Brent (Waltham, Massachusetts,
b. 1978–)

White Horse, 2022

Repurposed items and mixed media

Courtesy of Chase Young Gallery



Sarah Meyers Brent (Waltham, Massachusetts,
b. 1978–)

A Portrait of a Woman and a Mother II, 2024

Repurposed items and mixed media

Courtesy of Chase Young Gallery



Sarah Meyers Brent (Waltham, Massachusetts,
b. 1978–)

Wild Things, 2024

Repurposed items and mixed media

Courtesy of Chase Young Gallery

Discarded children’s toys, electronics, artificial flowers, and worn-out clothing meld together in Sarah Meyers Brent’s sculptures, embodying the complex chaos of motherhood and the degradation of our environment. Through repurposing these forgotten items, Brent draws attention to the environmental crisis and breathes new life and significance into materials that would otherwise clutter homes and landfills. The amalgamation of textures, shapes, and colors, often accentuated by a

thick gesso application, mirrors both organic growth and decay. Brent says that they “express the weight of raising children in environmental disorder while attempting to maintain a sense of self and balance.”

Contrasting with the stark geometry of the gallery’s column, **Wild Thing** is a site-specific creation that gathers and grows from the ceiling before cascading downward, evoking a sense of physical and emotional burden. In conversation with **White Horse** and **Portrait of a Woman and a Mother**, Brent’s sculptures highlight not only society’s overwhelming accumulation of objects but also the daunting environmental consequences of such excess.

**[Suggested path: Return to gaze to the main wall
on the east side of the gallery]**



[Installation view of works by Nicole Duennebier]



Nicole Duennebier (Malden, Massachusetts,
b. 1983–)

Malden Monolith after October, 2024

Acrylic on panel

Courtesy of 13FOREST Gallery



Nicole Duennebier (Malden, Massachusetts,
b. 1983–)

Funeral Wreath Study, 2024

Acrylic on panel

Courtesy of 13FOREST Gallery



Nicole Duennebier (Malden, Massachusetts,
b. 1983–)

Malden Monolith and Cemetery Debris, 2024

Acrylic on panel

Courtesy of 13FOREST Gallery

Natural phenomena and a love of “candied, Old-Master opulence” have been a constant source of inspiration for Nicole Duennebier. Her lavish still-life paintings navigate a fine line between desire and disgust, luring viewers into dark, foreign landscapes perplexing for their dual display of decay and overgrowth. Duennebier’s lavish paintings are both inviting and repelling, an “irresistible allure of wasteful abundance,” according to the artist.

This triptych, created for this exhibition, features the graveyard Duennebier regularly visits near her home in Malden, Massachusetts. In these otherwise staid grounds, which include gravestones dating from the turn of the 20th century to the present, are sometimes-garish memorial wreaths, lawn ornaments, and artificial flowers. Blown about and scattered across the landscape, these objects mix seamlessly with other lingering waste from a nearby abandoned dumpsite. Re-consumed by the earth, inorganic waste pokes through and piles on top of the hallowed soil, creating curious new markers of human presence in conversation with the somber granite headstones.



**[Installation view of works by Jennifer
McCandless]**



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Sweat, 2020

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

In the Garden, 2023

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Feeling Droopy, 2021

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

City Sasquatch, 2023

Granola and ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Scenes from the Apocalypse: Plastic Bird, 2020

Stoneware and mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Relics from the Future: Fantastical Monster Paw,

2021

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Run Amok: Poseidon's Toxic Fish Pile, 2023

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

After the Humans Are Gone: Fantastical Rainbow

Monster, 2022

Ceramic

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts



Jennifer McCandless (Burlington, Vermont, b.1967–)

Last Ditch Effort at Assimilation: In the Pipes, 2023

Stoneware and mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Soapbox Arts

Jennifer McCandless’s ceramic sculptures suggest a realm where humanity’s insecurities and weaknesses—from patriarchal pressures to the ramifications of environmental negligence—are on full display. Influenced by magical realism and employing a post-Funk style, her sculptures brazenly explore the limitations of her medium and imagination.

In these whimsical yet reflective pieces, McCandless confronts autobiographical references with a keen

wit, melding playful aesthetics with darker, critical undertones. Throughout her work, she uses humor and satirical narratives as accessible vehicles for confronting sociopolitical norms and personal identity constructions. McCandless's use of vibrant colors, exaggerated forms, and varied surface treatments attracts viewers, initially masking the serious topics beneath, echoing McCandless's belief that comedy serves as a gateway to exploring profound aspects of the human experience. The artist herself notes that her sculptures "usher in this mystery of ever truly knowing oneself and the challenge of knowing others in one's community."

[Suggested path: Proceed around the column and enter the screening room to your right]



**[Installation view of works by
Allison Maria Rodriguez]**



[Allison Maria Rodriguez video still screen, Right]



[Allison Maria Rodriguez video still screen, Left]



[Allison Maria Rodriguez video still screen, Center]

Allison Maria Rodriguez (Boston, Massachusetts,
b. 1979–)

Legends Breathe, 2019/2024

3-channel video installation from ongoing larger
video installation project

Courtesy of Allison Maria Rodriguez

Allison Maria Rodriguez crafts fantastical
dreamscapes that encourage emotional and
conceptual exploration. Her video art installations
beckon viewers into uncharted territories, providing
fresh insights and cognitive tools to navigate our
intricate world.

In her ongoing series, “Legends Breathe,” Rodriguez
highlights the transformative potential of creativity

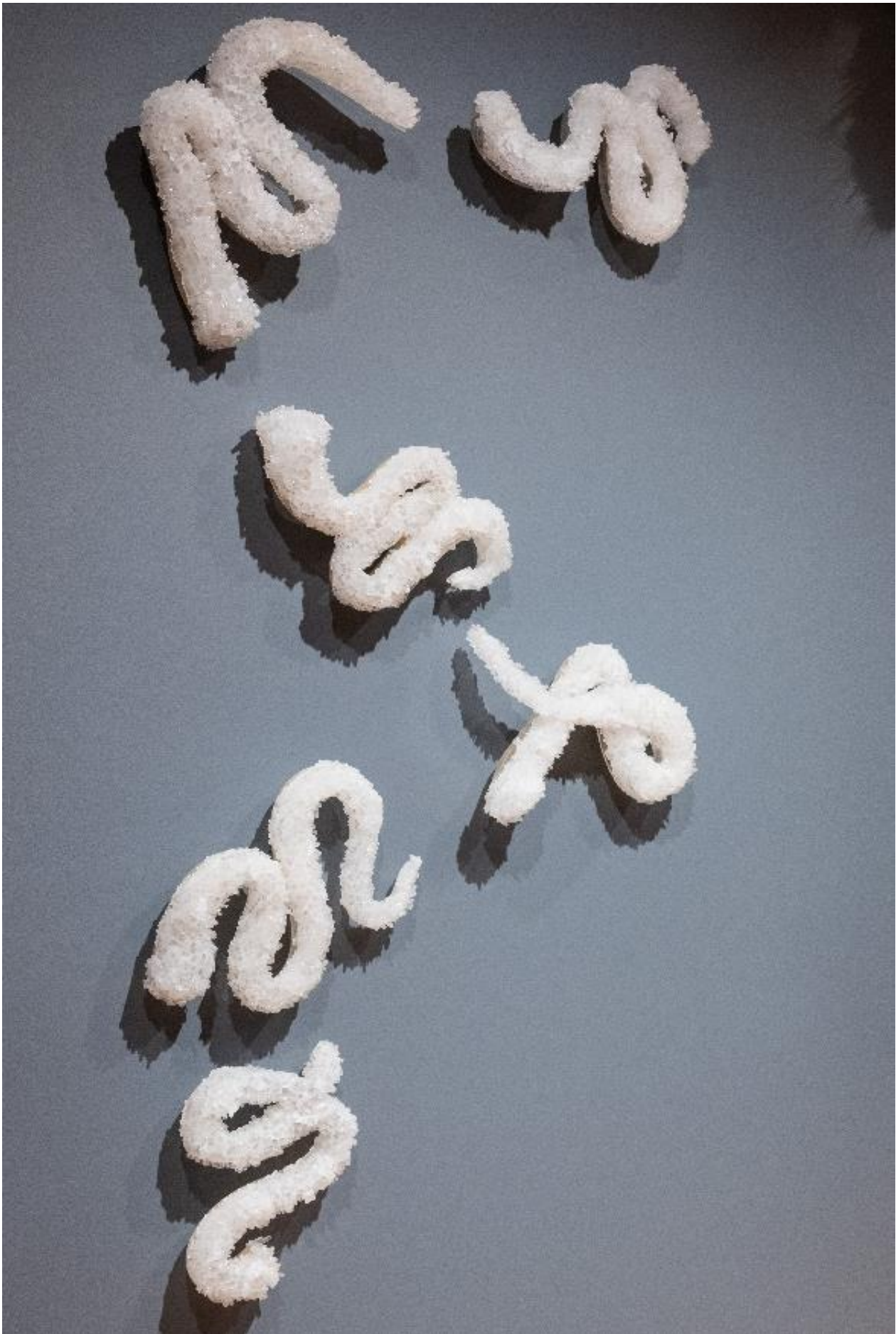
and imagination in healing from trauma. Drawing from interviews with female-identified and nonbinary creatives, she illuminates childhood dreams that acted as guiding beacons on their paths toward resilience. These fantasies signify a survival mechanism deeply grounded in self-empowerment. While the artist observes that imagination and play are often “declared worthless in a capitalist society centered around White patriarchal notions of productivity,” she argues that these childlike traits “are building blocks in creating something new—they are exercises in resistance and in the possibility of reimagining our world.” Many of the dreams Rodriguez explores are rooted in nature, featuring endangered species and threatened ecosystems,

forging connections between personal healing and the planet's wellbeing.

[Suggested path: Exit the screening room, turn around, and observe one work on the left side and three works on the right side of the wall]



[Installation view of works by Laura Kramer]



Laura Kramer (Barrington, Rhode Island, b. 1970–)

Serpentine, 2018

Glass

Courtesy of Heller Gallery



Laura Kramer (Barrington, Rhode Island, b. 1970–)

Sulfur, 2018

Glass

Courtesy of Heller Gallery



Laura Kramer (Barrington, Rhode Island, b. 1970–)

Tourmaline, 2018

Glass

Courtesy of Heller Gallery



Laura Kramer (Barrington, Rhode Island, b. 1970–)

Cinnabar, 2024

Glass

Courtesy of Heller Gallery

Laura Kramer's glass-encrusted sculptures simultaneously entice and warn viewers. Influenced by natural history writings and insights from the early Renaissance, her creations delve into the intricate interplay among medicine, science, and religion. In an era when nature was perceived as a realm where both virtue and malevolence thrived, collectors displayed cabinets of curiosities featuring natural specimens, scientific instruments, and ornamental artifacts, grappling with these philosophical paradoxes.

Kramer's sculptures each embody a different poisonous mineral and serpent, exploring their elemental qualities while challenging binary classification systems. Kramer both leans into the beauty of the materials she works with while also embracing their problematic properties. "Glass can express itself in so many different ways," she reflects. "It contains dualities—hard and soft, durable and delicate." Similarly, each of her embellished forms possesses dual healing and toxic properties. What brings pleasure can also bring pain. For instance, cinnabar, once believed to treat anxiety and depression, can also cause severe neurotoxicity as well as renal and cognitive issues.

[End of Exhibition]