

# WILDING CRAN GALLERY



**VIKKY ALEXANDER** *Les Jardins de Versailles*

November 12th - December 22nd

Wilding Cran Gallery is pleased to announce *Les Jardins De Versailles*, an exhibition of recent work by Montreal-based artist Vikky Alexander.

Since the 1980s, Vikky Alexander has utilized sculpture, collage, photography, and video to explore utopian illusions at the nexus of desire, capitalism, and commodification in modern culture. While her earlier work focuses on the idealization of glamor in contemporary advertising and consumer culture, *Les Jardins De Versailles* sets out to penetrate the fantasy of constructed environments. Expanding upon her fascinations with appropriated imagery, Alexander draws on 18th century architectural engravings of Versailles as the template for her conceptual collages.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the viewer is invited to peer through abstracted, polychromatic portals into the geometric topiaries of the Palace of Versailles. Mounted on aluminum, Alexander's collages source imagery from advertisements, magazines, origami, shelving paper, and archives of her

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own photography. The resulting prints incorporate color and black and white in a surprising landscape where abstraction and realism collide. Through the varying textures of tall grasses, woodgrains, photographic pixels, textiles, and color fields, we catch the occasional glimpse of an airplane's contrail, a parking lot, a model's hand, a flower market permeating the simulacra, shattering the illusion of virtual tourism to remind us that not all is as it seems.

In the Age of Absolutism, the design of pleasure parks led to major technological developments that allowed for the manipulation of water and soil, vegetation and climate. Throughout the gardens of Versailles, these mechanisms were harnessed to mold and reflect the power, leisure, and romance of elite society. The theatrical staging of *Les Jardins De Versailles* exudes a juxtaposed air of sterility and wilderness, an homage to the cultural desire for mastery over nature. The process of cropping, enlarging, rearranging, and collaging distinct, yet unplaceable images constructs an animated labyrinth of the luxurious flora and cascading fountains that came to characterize the aristocratic landscape of 18th century France. Alongside the artist's characteristic photo collages, immersive floor-to-ceiling vinyl murals further serve to transpose the viewer, to the point that we may not know on which side of the smokescreen we stand.

Throughout her body of work, Vikky Alexander explores methods of landscaping the sublime in order to expose the seams that bind our visions of utopia. The exhibition of *Les Jardins De Versailles* pieces together a puzzle of composite desires, revealing the relationship between banality and luxury, void and folly. Leading us through simulated views of the Baths of Apollo, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Grove of Domes, Alexander brings the viewer into a metaphysical space charged with layers of artifice to confront the playful, albeit sinister performance of paradise.

*Les Jardins De Versailles* is Alexander's third solo exhibition at Wilding Cran Gallery.

Vikky Alexander (b. 1959, Victoria, BC) is a Montreal-based artist celebrated for her ongoing contributions to Pictures Generation strategies of critique by appropriation. Engendering a quietly reflective feminism that investigates the power of framing devices within the architectures of corporate branding, her works assess the fetishistic, bureaucratized and aspirational generating recombinatory mixtures of appropriated scenes of natural landscapes and typifications of beauty that demarcate the romanticization of nature and the naturalization of romance. Activating a jarring fracture between embodied experience and its idealized presentation, her sensual and stylized works spanning installation, sculpture, photography, and video cumulatively denature the commercial annexation of personal capacities for self-reflection.

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Vikky Alexander's work has been exhibited internationally at venues including The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver; Dia Art Foundation, New York; White Columns, New York; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Genève; New Museum, New York; Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal; International Center of Photography, New York; Canada House, London; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Barbican Art Gallery, London; and Yokohama Civic Art Gallery, Yokohama. Her works are included in the permanent collections of the International Center of Photography; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva; Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles; National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Deste Foundation, among numerous others. A graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, she lives and works in Montreal, Quebec. Upcoming and current presentations of her work include exhibitions at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Sprengel Museum, Hannover; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; and Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano.

Image: *Vue des Trois Fontaines (autre perspective)*, 2021, Inkjet Print Mounted on Dibond, 40 x 60 in., 101.6 x 152.4 cm