

WILDING CRAN GALLERY



Francesca Gabbiani *Mutations*

June 29 - July 29, 2023

Wilding Cran Gallery is pleased to present *Mutations*, a solo exhibition of Francesca Gabbiani's material explorations of Southern California and the vulnerable narrative of paradise consumed.

Drawing inspiration from her experience living in Los Angeles, Francesca Gabbiani has been captivated by the phenomena and mythology of wildfires, returning to them over and over in an effort to dissect their psychological impact upon our social, environmental, and emotional landscapes. Towing the fine line between enchantment and trepidation, Gabbiani's intricate, labor-intensive collages evoke the fragility of the paper medium and the artist's devotional attention to beauty, while addressing the pervasive anxiety of climate disaster.

Throughout the exhibition, the image of the palm tree stands out as an icon of Gabbiani's oeuvre. Despite the fact that most palm tree species are non-native to Southern California, their historic importation into the region led to the mythic construction of a new Eden on the Pacific, a sheltered dreamscape of leisure and endless summer. Within *Hot Panorama II*, 2022, two palms stand as beacons, aglow in flames against a backdrop of billowing smoke and ash. Despite the enticing hues of

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orange, yellow, red, green, and hot white, the scene captures a precarious moment, granting the viewer time to embrace the allure and fear of the unknown.

In an effort to shatter the artifice of man-made paradise, Gabbiani uses markers such as chain link fences, telephone poles, burnt-out cars, and swimming pools to point to the synergistic relationship between the industrial and natural worlds. Amidst the delicately layered works on paper, a short film titled *Sea of Fire* screens within the gallery space, granting movement and sound to the artist's story. Opening upon a theatrical stage, a cherubic Lucifer peeks from behind red curtains, beckoning us into the flames. Breaching the gap between inferno and seascape, the film follows the journey of a marionette spider, ushering the viewer through a horrific blaze of obstacles to the fixed horizon line and ebbing tides of the Pacific Ocean.

By granting subjectivity to the life-sustaining realities of our planet, Francesca Gabbiani asks us not to look away in fear of what we cannot control. Despite decay and destruction, *Mutations* reminds us that wildfire is not an illicit attack, but a call to empathize and communicate with nature. For thousands of years, leading up to the institution of fire suppression laws, controlled fire was used to purify deadened landscape, fertilizing soil for new life. It is through this lens that blazing palms, ashen skies, and phosphorescent seas challenge us to reimagine our role in the shifting landscape of the earth and its inhabitants.

Francesca Gabbiani (b. 1965, Montreal, Canada) creates depictions of overlooked landscapes, where nature and urbanization collide in their true anarchic state. Combining intricately layered cut paper, mixed media washes, and airbrush, Gabbiani's paper paintings pair literary influences with her own photographic documentation of environments in disastrous, damaged, and regenerative states. Reminiscent of settings in science fiction, her philosophical approach depicts humanity secondary to the omnipresent force of Mother Nature.

Selected solo exhibitions include Cedric Bardawil Gallery, London (2023); Mixografia, Los Angeles (2022); Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, Texas (2021); Monica De Cardenas, Milan, Italy (2021) and Zuoz, Switzerland (2020); GAVLAK, Los Angeles (2018), and film screenings at the Malibu International Film Festival, Los Angeles (2023, awarded Best Experimental Short); Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills at San Vicente Bungalows (2022); and the Getty Center, Los Angeles (2022). Selected group exhibitions include Kunsthaus Centre d'Art Pasquart, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland (2023), the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2022); MOCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2022); Kunsthaus Zurich (2021); KANAL Centre Pompidou, Brussels (2020); Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles (2018); MAMCO Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva (2016), and the Underground Museum (2014). Her work is included in the collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MOCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; National Collection, Switzerland; and the Yale University Art Gallery, among others. Gabbiani lives and works in Los Angeles.