

MEPAINTSME

Press Release

On View: Aurélie Salavert: Secret Garden

Dates: April 27 - May 31, 2023

Location: mepaintsme.com

MEPAINTSME is pleased to present *Secret Garden*, a thematic solo presentation of the intimate paintings of French artist Aurélie Salavert, with introductory text by Kendall DeBoer.



"Sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something was pushing and drawing in my chest and making me breathe fast. Magic is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us. In this garden - in all the places."

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1911), 300.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. / Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, henna with spikenard, / spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices / a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." / "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south! Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits."

Song of Songs 4:12-16, 21st Century King James Version

Inventive, evocative, and shimmering, Aurélie Salavert's works sidestep categorical constraints and defy traditional modes of meaning-making. In fact, Aurélie declines to date her work, refusing to anchor her art to the confines of time. Why should she? Her interests lie beyond the scope of the demonstrable, the perceptible, and the legible, but not at the expense of her aesthetic attunement to simplicity and lightness.

Using found materials, Aurélie creates from visions. She says, "an image appears in my mind without me asking for it," so her compositions always bear a trace of the phantasmal, and of spontaneity. This selection of twenty-three works, aptly titled *Secret Garden*, attests to recurring thematic and formal concerns: portraits, landscapes, creatures, and abstractions. Fantasy and mysticism characterize each drawing and painting, even her representations of subjects from everyday life.

Inspired by the infinite possibilities and absolute freedom that imagination offers, Aurélie calls her art "a playground of surprises." When I picture Aurélie's secret garden, I think of this playground of surprises as a remix of the medieval *hortus conclusus*. In its strictest sense, a *hortus conclusus* is an enclosed garden for the Biblical Virgin and Child, or at least for a chaste and demure maiden. Sometimes they're joined by a group of female saints, a crowd of angels, or perhaps a unicorn. Rife with symbolic and allegorical intention beyond the scope of the "real," the presence of the *hortus conclusus* in secular illustrations of unicorn hunts points to its mysterious and enchanting appeal that exceeds its Biblical origins.

The *hortus conclusus*, transcendent and independent, is a space of magic, beauty, abundance, and indeterminacy. Enigmatic, alluring, and sacred, Aurélie's enclosed garden cultivates flora, fauna, hybridity, connection, and jubilation. An anthropomorphized daisy waves (*Thank You All for Reactivating the World in Beauty*); a pink horse rears underneath oversized ball-point pen stars (*Impermanence*); a peaceful and ghostly face floats amongst bright, vibrant blossoms and blooms, part Veil-of-Veronica and part botanical study (*Contemplation*). Humanoid figures recline amid mischievous and playful black birds (*Crossing*) or find themselves enveloped in the plush warmth of numerous enormous cats (*Boudoir*). Scintillating metallics and glitter add an extra dash of the marvelous, as a veiled being emits golden rays from their eyes (*Breath of Eternity*), two owls perch beside a sparkling azure waterfall, and

three impish acrobats stacked atop one another adorn themselves in gleaming costumes.

With these dazzling and metamorphosing scenes, Aurélie welcomes us into her secret garden, where we too may experience the affective forces of enchantment, astonishment, and amazement. Aurélie invites us to be receptive to the marvelousness of our world, seen and unseen, material and immaterial.

- Text by Kendall DeBoer

FEATURED ARTIST Aurélie Salavert graduated from the Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Marseille in 1990. In 1992, she received a grant from the DRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur - Ministry of Culture. Her work was featured in solo exhibitions at the Galerie Athanor in Marseille and The Calvet Museum in Avignon before she began her collaboration with Galerie Aliceday, Brussels (2008 - 2014). In her most recent exhibition, Aurélie joined renowned florist Thierry Boutemy in a collaborative installation 'Hearts Up' at the Boutemy Atelier. A selection of her artworks were acquired for the permanent collections of the Fond Régional d'art Contemporain (Paris) and the Fond National d'art Contemporain (France), and individual works reside in numerous private collections throughout Europe and the United States.

FEATURED WRITER Kendall DeBoer is a Providence-based curator and art historian specializing in craft, surrealisms, and outlier art. She is a PhD Candidate in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester, and a curatorial assistant in the Department of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Her expertise includes unconventional materials like cellophane, tinsel, ribbons, and other party favors.

mepaintsme.com is the online art gallery of independent artist and curator, mepaintsme, who has been recognized for his idiosyncratic approach to curating on the instagram feed @mepaintsme. The gallery aims to source and showcase the best examples of artworks being created today in a string of thematic solo and group exhibitions.

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