

RUIZ-HEALY ART

Latinx, Latin America, & Texas Contemporary Art

Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to present *Leigh Anne Lester: Vain Fictions of Our Own Devising*, a solo exhibition of works by Leigh Anne Lester, on view at our San Antonio gallery from September 18th to October 19th, 2024. An opening reception will be held on Wednesday, September 18th, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. There will be an artist talk and reception with Kelly Lyons, PhD, Professor of Biology at Trinity University, moderated by Greg Hazelton, PhD, Trinity University's Director of Environmental Studies, on Saturday, October 5th, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. *Leigh Anne Lester: Vain Fictions of Our Own Devising* is a continuation of an extensive body of work that explores bioengineering and the genetic modification of plants. In her works, Lester confronts the audience with the allure of "playing god" by manipulating natural occurrences through technology. The viewer is left to wonder if the power to change nature outweighs the possibility of toppling the balance of individual environments and the planet's natural order.

Lester attended the Berlin Residency Program, sponsored by The Contemporary at Blue Star, which influenced this body of work. The artist was moved by the city's adaptation after World War II: "When they couldn't remove all of the debris in the city, they created public parks on the 'rubble mountains' and let nature take over. This acclimatization leads to places people find refuge, layered on top of destruction." Like these parks, Lester's imagery is layered with different histories underneath each surface. Lester pays homage to these repurposed rubble mounds in the work, *The Eternal Series of Destruction and Resurrection*, the use of wooden sculptural branches that are draped with painted sculptures of natural debris - a tree stump (long-lived) and a leaf (short-lived) found on the "rubble mountains," emphasizing the passage of time and the silent power of flora to absorb humans actions and the unsettled potential of the technology we are capable of now.

The exhibition's title references Sir Issac Newton's book, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, which urges the reader not to attempt to transmute the patterns of nature, for it is only constant to itself. *Blind Trajectory #2* references her original plant imagery and visual vocabulary while simultaneously serving as a specimen case of genetic modification and spotlights the elusiveness of controlling the natural order. One of her larger installations in the

show, *Proclamation of Nature*, adds onto the “visual vocabulary” of her creations by referencing sentence diagrams from old grammar lessons. Building off her foundational botanicals, Lester explores the nuances of distorting perception. Connected frames will house mutations in watercolor of her previous plant imagery and physically connect to other framed distortions with wooden lines/bridges. The resulting family tree/structure/system will have branches sprouting from the connecting “sentence bridges.” On those branches, draped like Spanish moss, will be cut-out painted blind-contour drawing sculptures of some visual vocabulary within the frames. The draping will obscure the underlying information.

Lester’s art continuously adds to a greater botanical ecosystem of her imagination, aiming to mimic genetic processes and recycle aspects of previous work to generate new, abstract compositions. Lester approaches her works like an animator capturing stop-motion frames of cellular mutation, successfully achieving a visual and thematic distortion through juxtaposed techniques such as blind contour drawing and digital manipulation. She also considers the global impact of climate change, researching plants and their slow yet insistent adaptation to man-made spheres. The artist states, “Technology and the human hand are important buttresses for [my] work, as they are how humans are changing our environment.”

About Ruiz-Healy Art

Founded in San Antonio, TX, in 2006, Ruiz-Healy Art represents an international roster of artists, emphasizing Latinx and Latin American artists and working with prominent Texas-based artists. Biculturalism and identity discourse are important in several artists we collaborate with. In the spring of 2019, we opened a gallery space in the Upper East Side of New York City that works in tandem with the gallery in San Antonio as a platform to disseminate the artist’s work. The continuous investments in these under-represented areas have remained a longstanding signature of the gallery program. The gallery is recognized for its success in placing works by our artists in prestigious museum collections ranging from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution, the LA County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Antonio Museum of Art, McNay Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and many others.