

San Antonio



Leigh Anne Lester's Window Works

Watch Frankenflora transform

By Dan Goddard

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Beware of Leigh Anne Lester's "Frankenflora" spreading and mutating in the front windows of Artpace.

In the same way the fictional monster Dr. Frankenstein was made by stitching together parts from different bodies, the San Antonio artist's recent works are made by blending various aspects of vegetation –flowers, vines, seedpods and ferns. The combination creates fantastical plants that are beautiful yet vaguely menacing.

Derived from drawings of historical botanicals, Lester's hybrid flora work is inspired by genetic modification. Scientists can "improve" plants by manipulating their genes, but it can take years to determine whether the results were positive.

"I like the strange shadows the pieces create so the lighting is going to be important," Lester says. "People should wonder what these weird plants are becoming. The potential of genetic modification is as exciting as it is frightening."

Bits and pieces of her mutant plants will be found in odd places around the building.

She's also taken some of her previous drawings, distorted the works with Photoshop, and mounted the cut-paper pieces on four squares of Plexiglas. The resulting 3-D translucent mural is lit dramatically to form shadows in her WindowWorks installation.

Co-founder of Cactus Bra Space and manager at San Angel Folk Art at the Blue Star Arts Complex, Lester won the \$50,000 Hunting Art Prize in 2011 with a graphite drawing that's now part of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' permanent collection. Next up, she's planning to get back to her artistic roots. "After this Artpace project, I'm looking forward to taking a nice, long break that doesn't involve X-Acto knives."

WindowWorks: Leigh Anne Lester: Jan. 10-April 28 at Artpace, 445 N.

Main Ave., 212-

4900, artpace.org