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The Clash of Nature and the Human Imprint in “Farewell, Eden”

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During the 19th century, landscape painting was a popular form of expression for artists to celebrate mankind’s dominion over nature. Pastoral scenes of manicured lawns, tamed gardens and ripe harvests depicted a peaceful, almost perfect world where man and nature thrived in harmonious union.

Currently on view at Descanso Garden’s Sturt Haaga Gallery, “Farewell, Eden” presents us with a much different perspective. Now that our ecosystem has been severely compromised after years upon years of so-called human progress, our old, romantic notions about nature no longer apply as an accurate representation of our planet’s health. Comprising 62 pieces by 13 Los Angeles based artists, “Farewell, Eden” poignantly articulates this reality across three gallery spaces, each of which afford viewers visual contact with the surrounding gardens.



Lynn Aldrich, *Losing My Lagoon* (2014)

One of the first works encountered is Lynn Aldrich's sculptural wall piece, *Losing My Lagoon* (2014). Spanning 32 inches, the piece expresses a fantastical interpretation of marine flora and fauna. Assembled from a mashup of cleaning utensils such as sponges, mop-heads, and plastic gloves, *Losing My Lagoon* speaks to our pressing need for water restoration. Colorful mop-heads peer out like spindly sea urchins, round plastic scouring pads repose like sleeping sea anemones, and a number of colored sponges mimic, well, sponges. More than a call for trash free seas, the sculpture also accentuates our reliance on free flowing fresh water, now an endangered resource. When viewers stop to look down and into the sculpture, they will notice several steel drain covers, set within the work's center. These, along with the sculpture's shape and placement on the wall, irresistibly evoke the image of a sink, which ultimately amplifies Aldrich's message by linking our ecosystem's health to familiar objects in our daily lives.

Other artists featured include Jane Brucker, Carlee Fernandez, Mark Steven Greenfield, Dee Hibbet-Jones, Carmine Iannaccone, Gloria Kondrup, Nadege Monchera Baer, Elizabeth Saveri, and Amir Zaki. Curated by John David O'Brien, "Farewell, Eden" is an important exhibition. As enticing as it is evocative, the broad range of work by this select group of artists beautifully articulates today's collision between human advancement and the formerly wild, as well as our urgent need for conservation. "Farewell, Eden" runs through April 3rd and is presented in collaboration with another, similarly themed show entitled "Urbanature," running at the Art Center College of Design's Williamson Gallery in Pasadena.

-Anise Stevens