

# ALICE GAUVIN GALLERY

## *Asters & Goldenrod*

Curated by Tessa G. O'Brien and Hilary Schaffner, in collaboration with Alice Gauvin Gallery

September 20 – November 12, 2023

Opening reception: Friday, September 22, 5-8PM

Alice Gauvin Gallery is pleased to present “Asters & Goldenrod,” a group exhibition featuring works by Meghan Brady, Lauren Luloff, Eleanor Conover, Emily Noelle Lambert, Richard Yu-Tang Lee, Ilse Sørensen Murdock, Matthew Sepielli, Jennie Jieun Lee, Jackie Gendel, and Hannah Secord Wade.

The exhibition title, *Asters & Goldenrod*, is drawn from a passage in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer, discussing the mysterious mutuality of wildflowers: “If a fountain could jet bouquets of chrome yellow in dazzling arches of chrysanthemum fireworks, that would be Canada Goldenrod...Where the soil is damp enough, they stand side by side with their perfect counterpart, New England Asters...The daisylike fringe of purple petals surrounds a disc as bright as the sun at high noon, a golden orange pool, just a tantalizing shade darker than the surrounding goldenrod. Alone, each is a botanical superlative. Together, the visual effect is stunning. Purple and gold, the heraldic colors of the king and queen of the meadow, a royal procession in complementary colors...Why do they stand beside each other when they could grow alone?”

The interdependence of flowers is quickly evident in a glance outside during late summer in Maine, but the question prevails year-round between artists. What is the magic alchemy that braids individuals together across time and geographical distance, creating a third entity that is a conversation, a question, a wellspring of inspiration and a buffer against the noise of the world?

In *Asters & Goldenrod*, the curatorial team invited five New England-based artists to nominate a peer with whom they are in a creative dialogue to be part of the exhibition. The resulting pairings show clear formal threads through shared material thinking and color harmonies, but more distinct is the attitude that the pairings take on, as if they are listening to the same album. Lauren Luloff and Ilse Sørensen Murdock immerse the landscape in a static buzz of repeated marks, pushing and pulling the grid in and out of focus. Jennie Jieun Lee and Emily Noelle Lambert create expansive ceramics, glazing with a painters' sensibility and building with free-form confidence. Hannah Secord Wade and Richard Yu-Tang Lee go muted and mysterious, Yu-Tang Lee's dreamy percussion of brushstrokes vibrating next to Wade's soft pastel worlds of her signature symbol language. Meghan Brady and Jackie Gendel play with geometry and storytelling in rich, saturated hues, flattening the body and puzzling shapes into layered painterly compositions. Eleanor Conover and Matthew Sepielli fracture space in low-relief earth tones, mining their surfaces and minding their edges.

**Tessa Greene O'Brien** is a Maine-based artist and curator with a multi-faceted painting practice. She views painting as a framework through which she connects to the world and deepens her understanding of it. Working in a variety of media and scales that range from architectural exterior murals to postcard-sized watercolor painting, O'Brien is perpetually interested in the possibilities of paint.

O'Brien has shown throughout the United States, including recent exhibitions at Dowling Walsh Gallery and Buoy Gallery in Maine, and Sears Peyton Gallery in NYC. She was a 2022-2023 Residential Fellow at the Lunder Institute at Colby College, and has attended residencies at Surf Point Foundation, the Tides Institute, Monson Arts, Open Studio Residency at Haystack, Hewnoaks, Vermont Studio Center, Joseph A Fiore Art Center, and the Stephen Pace House residency. Her practice has received support through grants including the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, St Boltophs Emerging Artist Grant, Ellis Beauregard Travel Grant, Maine Arts Commissions Project Grant, The Joseph A. Fiore Painting Prize, Kindling Fund Grant through SPACE Gallery, and a Professional Development Grant through Maine College of Art. She lives and works in South Portland, ME.

**Hilary Schaffner's** experience in the art world spans over twenty years. In 2011 she co-founded Halsey McKay Gallery in East Hampton, New York with the goal of bringing mid-career and emerging artists to the area. Prior to founding the gallery, she received her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City while working as Director of the Wild Project Gallery on the Lower East Side of New York. In addition to working in the commercial art world, Hilary spent several years working in public relations for arts institutions. Her clients included the Dia Art Foundation, Isamu Noguchi Foundation and the Cisneros Foundation. She has been a guest critic at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, NY; School of Visual Arts, NY, Parsons School of Design, NY and MECA, ME. Her curatorial work has been featured in Artforum, ArtNews, Interview, The East Hampton Star, Modern Painters, Vogue, Portland Press Herald and Boston Art Review. Hilary currently lives and works in Portland, Maine.

Alice Gauvin Gallery is located at 43 York Street, Portland, ME, 04101. It is open Thursday & Friday, 1-6PM; Saturday and Sunday 11-4PM; and by appointment. For additional images or information, please email [hello@alicegauvingallery.com](mailto:hello@alicegauvingallery.com).