

CHEYMORE GALLERY

Matt Austin
Plant Life

April 27 - July 6, 2019

opening reception: Saturday, April 27, 2019 5-7pm

Curated by Daphne Ireland Whelahan



Cheymore Gallery is happy to present Matt Austin *Plant Life* curated by Daphne Ireland Whelahan, on view from April 27 until July 6, 2019, with an opening reception for the artist Saturday, April 27 from 5-7 pm. This is Austin's second exhibition with the gallery and features new paintings and wooden sculptures inspired by his pursuit of an 'Artist Plant Conservatory'. The Conservatory is a living connection to celebrated artists both past and present. It began when Austin received a cutting of the Sansevieria plant depicted within Grant Wood's iconic 'American Gothic' and 'Woman with Plants'. Stewarding the plant depicted within these paintings had Austin contemplating the fact that he was breathing air produced by the same plant that had produced air for this renowned painter. Austin then acquired a cutting of Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock's spider plant and his work began in earnest to build his conservatory. Imbued with Austin's quick wit and parallel storylines, the new works depict the lives of these plants within the realm of the artist; yet also riff on art history and the meta act of painting a plant, based on a sculpture of a plant, of a plant found in a painting. Austin uses casein paint, a type of tempera paint that is distinctly matte. He has been perfecting this technique for more than a decade. Rendered delicately, the paintings harken back to an early American style, yet the signs of electricity and the phosphorescent sculptures let the viewer know these exist in the 21st century. The task of painting still lifes dates back centuries, and Austin's modern take on this classic painterly exercise speaks to the timelessness of his subjects.

"Matt has long been fascinated by the ways in which plants emerge in art, and how artists represent them, both literally and figuratively. Noting a particular mother-in-law plant making a repeat appearance in Grant Wood's work, he successfully obtained a cutting. He has been painting and carving its transformation in his studio for over two years. The paintings in *Plant Life* display Matt's mastery of realism while representing his natural, lyrical hand and inimitable use of color."

-Daphne Ireland Whelahan

Born into a family of muralists, illustrators and painters, Austin honed his craft as an artist after spending many years involved in art installation at the Yale Center for British Art. He has followed his curiosity since 1971 and when not in his studio, he can be found at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or climbing hills on his road racing bicycle.