

**JUNE 5–SEPTEMBER 13, 2015**

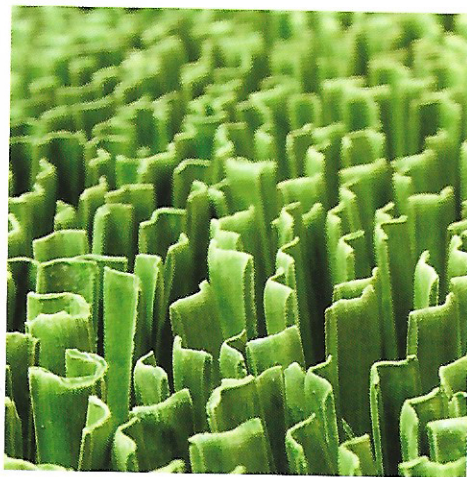
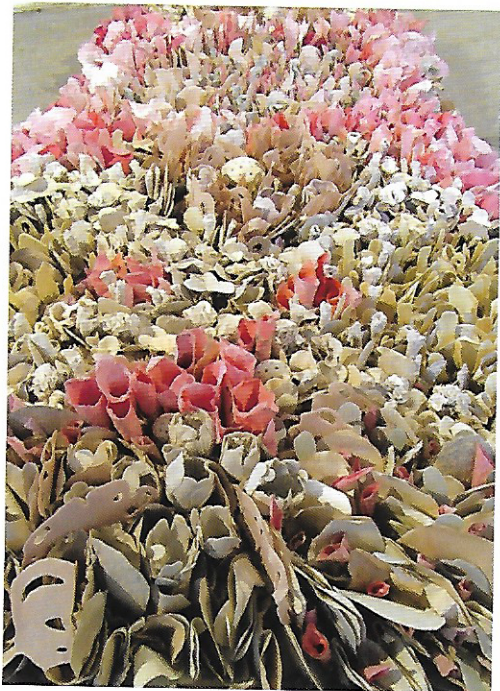
**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS**



**The concept of the “natural world” is rife with contradictions: it is a place of** respite but also capable of wreaking havoc. It is gentle and fragile, yet fierce and tenacious. Many of these qualities have also been ascribed to women, long seen as closer to nature than men. In art, nature and women have been closely entwined, with women artists historically pigeonholed into copying nature, whether in the form of still life, landscape, or portraiture. While contemporary women artists face no such constraints, they engage with this history when depicting natural subjects.

Today, artists dealing with the broad theme of nature often do so by referencing the ever-growing threats to the environment and fears for its sustainability. The artists featured in *Organic Matters* address modern society’s complex relationship with the environment through a diverse array of mediums.

*Organic Matters* is the fourth installment in NMWA’s biennial Women to Watch exhibition series, which features artists from the states and countries in which the museum has outreach committees. Participating committees met with curators in their respective regions to create shortlists of artists dealing with themes related to nature, and NMWA selected the final artists from this group.



Left: Rebecca Hutchinson, *Patterns of Nature* (detail), 2014; Porcelain paper clay, fiber, and organic material, 10 x 36 x 96 in.; Courtesy of the artist

Above and cover: Dawn Holder, *Monoculture* (detail), 2013; Porcelain, 2 ½ x 92 x 176 in.; Courtesy of the artist

From afar, *Monoculture* (2013) by **Dawn Holder** (b. 1976; Arkansas Committee) embodies the streamlined aesthetic of Minimalist sculpture, yet up close, the intricacy of the work becomes apparent. Drawing on the repetitive nature of traditional women's work, such as needlework, Holder skillfully created the individual blades of grass out of ceramic in a masterful blending of macro and micro viewpoints, reflecting the global and individual responsibility for the environment.

**Rebecca Hutchinson** (b. 1962; Massachusetts State Committee) is inspired by her research on ecosystems and close observation of plants that grow and thrive under diverse conditions. *Patterns of Nature* (2014) is meticulously installed anew for each exhibition, conceived by the artist as a response to the environment in which it is presented. Hutchinson's process evokes the adaptive capabilities of organisms.

To artist **Ysabel LeMay** (b. 1966; Texas State Committee), nature is a site of respite and refuge from the civilized world. Likening her process to painting, LeMay digitally manipulates and enhances her photographs to present her idealized, and sometimes otherworldly, vision of nature. In *Reflection* (2014), the appealing elements of different natural environments are combined, presenting birds—associated with air—within an ethereal body of water.



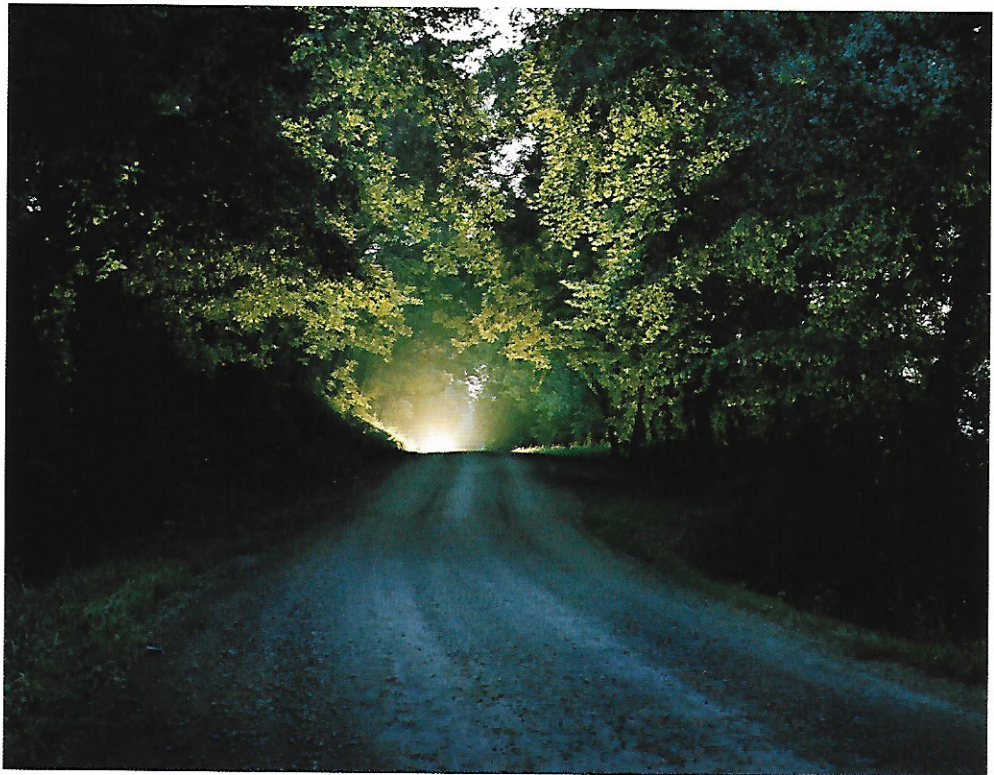
Above: Ysabel LeMay, *Reflection*, 2014; Color print diptych, 61 x 72 in. overall; Courtesy of the artist



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Photographs by **Lara Shipley** (b. 1980; Greater Kansas City Area Committee) are ambiguous in their characterization of the rural wooded landscape. *In the Ozarks There Are Lights and False Lights*, from her series "Devil's Promenade" (2013), resist romanticizing the countryside and instead depict the Spook Light of local legend, a mysterious glow that can be viewed as either comforting or threatening. For Shipley, the light and the stories surrounding it symbolize the inhabitants of this impoverished and isolated community.

In her video sequence *RHYTHMS* (2013), **Andrea Lira** (b. 1981; Chile Committee) creates metaphors about the similarities between humans and



Above: Lara Shipley, *In the Ozarks There Are Lights (Devil's Promenade)*, 2013; Inkjet print, 30 x 37 in.; Courtesy of the artist

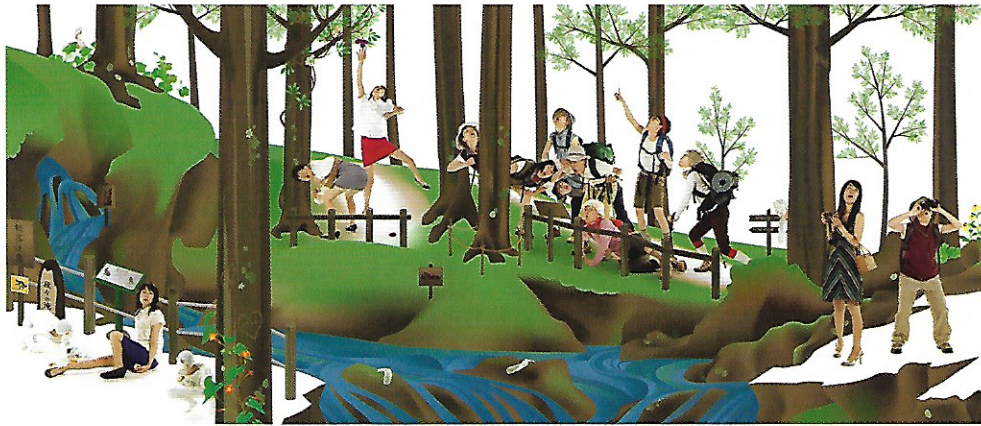
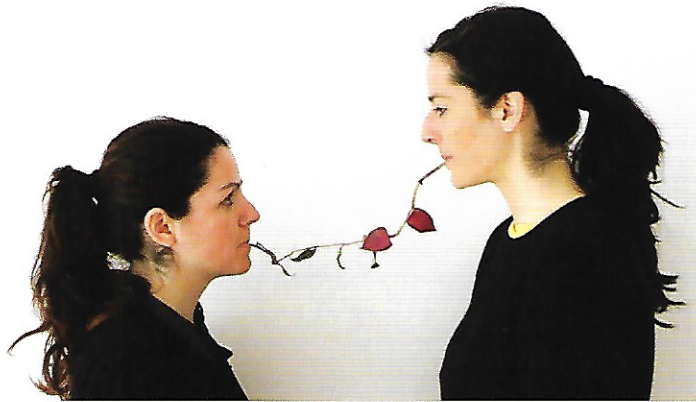


other organisms in an effort to understand the endless cycle of life. Lira speaks of nature having its own language, and her work emphasizes the balance and harmony that come from understanding that language.

**Mimi Kato** (b. 1974; Ohio Advisory Group) fuses traditional Japanese aesthetics with digital photography to create surreal environments inhabited by many figures who are, in fact, depictions of the artist herself. The division between the urban environment and bucolic nature in *Landscape Retreat: In the Woods* (2012) is obscured in Kato's hybrid digital landscapes. This work challenges stereotypes about the natural world, urging the viewer to consider urban green spaces like parks, medians, and empty lots as natural environments in their own right.

Right: Andrea Lira,  
*RHYTHMS*, 2013;  
Video and animation;  
Courtesy of the artist

Below: Mimi Kato,  
*Landscape Retreat: In  
the Woods* (detail),  
2012; Archival  
pigment print diptych,  
each print 28 x 65 in.;  
Courtesy of the artist







Details of work by (top, L-R): Goldschmied & Chiari, Jiha Moon, Jennifer Celio, and Lara Shipley;  
(second row, L-R): Mimi Kato, Françoise Pérovitch, Polly Morgan, and Andrea Lira;  
(bottom, L-R): Ysabel LeMay, Rebecca Hutchinson, Rachel Sussman, and Mary Tsiongas

NATIONAL MUSEUM  
*of WOMEN in the ARTS*

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nmwa.org | Two blocks north of Metro Center