

# FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE

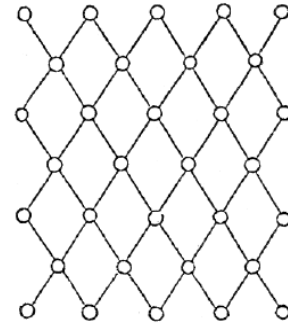
60 East 4th St. NYC

## THE GARDEN OF CYRUS

Lorena Ancona  
Amy Kim Keeler  
Kate Newby  
Lara Saget  
Martha Tuttle

June 6 - July 6th, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 6th, 6-8pm



Fortnight Institute is pleased to present *The Garden of Cyrus*, a group exhibition with five artists whose methods and materials are closely tied to nature and the communion that exists among the natural world, between all that is invisible and visible, alive and dead, mineral and vegetable, human and animal, ad infinitum. The interaction between the works in the exhibition is akin to a garden where a variety of forms, spaces, colors, and materials co-exist and reveal themselves through observation and physicality. Most works are sculptural and installation-based but none are floor-based, rather, works are suspended from the ceiling, others sit on shelves and some hang on the wall. The materials range from embroidery on corrugated cardboard, glass, and rope, wool, and linen, sticks, rubber, ceramics, and textiles made with dyes, such as cochineal, a thousands-year-old Mexican blood-red pigment derived from the *cochineal* insect.

The exhibition title is borrowed from Sir Thomas Browne's treatise, "The Garden of Cyrus," first published in 1658. In "The Garden of Cyrus," Browne's esoteric vision of the interconnection of art, nature and the Universe exists through the use of various symbols, including the quincunx pattern (illustrated above), the figure X and the lattice pattern. W.G. Sebald wrote in his book, "The Rings of Saturn," of Browne and the quincunx:

*Browne identifies this structure everywhere, in animate and inanimate matter: in certain crystalline forms, in starfish and sea urchins, in the vertebrae of mammals and the backbones of birds and fish, in the skins of various species of snake...in the physical shapes of caterpillars, butterflies, silkworms and moths, in the root of the water fern, in the seed husks of the sunflower and the Caledonian pine, within young oak shoots or the stem of the horsetail; and in the creations of mankind, in the pyramids of Egypt and the Mausoleum of Augustus as in the garden of King Solomon, which was planted with mathematical precision with pomegranate trees and white lilies.*

In Lorena Ancona's installation, *Synodical Venus*, deep hues of indigo and cochineal dyes diffuse on the surface of the cotton textile, like smoke, forming glyph-like patterns that allude to Mesoamerican mythology. In Maya script, a glyph, called the quincunx, exists along with a similar one found in Zapotec languages, meaning: life, breath, spirit. The fabric is held together by ceramics resembling animal and plant forms. Amy Kim Keeler's series, *Anthropocene*, embroidered cotton thread on corrugated cardboard, consists of opposing systems of shapes and colors, a spectrum of blue vertical lines, dark to light, disperse across the surface like a storm. Juxtaposed is a work composed of nebulous forms and markings similar to the glyph-like patterns in Ancona's installation.

Kate Newby's glass chimes, *They Sound Like Each Other*, hang from a dyed yellow rope across space, setting up a connection to the space around it, weaving its presence through the existing environment. The work animates as the light changes throughout the day, capturing and releasing elements from its surroundings through its transparent surface, as it transmits, reflects and refracts light. Newby's glass rock sculptures, *Early Each Evening*, are activated by its very natural structure: sand which is produced by the erosion of rocks, but also, the natural material used to create glass. These works are permeated with the very substance of earthly time. Lara Saget's *Hangings*, constructed out of rubber, rope, string, glass, crystal, and sticks, are like remnants from a forest ritual, hanging from the ceiling. They stand as structures of decay, held together by string and rope. Narratives and patterns endure,

buried under layers of sediment, Saget writes, "there may be no answers, nothing concrete to hold onto. But there are patterns; my charge is to distill the patterns."

In Martha Tuttle's gossamer-like works, *Let rocks be your guide* and *I am on the fence about gravity*, wool, linen, and pigment are woven together into harmonious arrangements, slightly taken out of balance, by the subtle presence of "rocks" made by coating pieces of slag from a coal forge coated with melted aluminum. Tuttle's alchemical use of wool and linen begins with raw materials that she acquires and works on a spinning wheel into thread, and which in turn, transforms into the fabric. Her constructions are like ancient tablets or fragments, with their geometric patterns and tactile textures that can almost be read.

The works in *The Garden of Cyrus* exhibition are shrouded in mystery but also speak of the universal connections between art and nature and the use of natural materials. But not all is to be learned and revealed from that which surrounds us, after all, as Browne once wrote, "all knowledge is enveloped in darkness."