

# REAL FRAGILE

RACHEL OWENS

MAY 14 - JULY 24, 2022



*Kneeler*, 2022, Broken glass, charcoal, resin, moss remnants, 21 x 42 x 29 in.

Geary is pleased to present *Real Fragile*, Rachel Owen's first exhibition with the gallery. The most personal work that Owens has produced, it was made upon the transition of her life from New York City to Amenia, New York, where she has lived since 2020. The materials that Owens uses are integral to the meaning and forms of the work. The objects in *Real Fragile* explore the precarious nature of existence, where the limbs of people, plants, and trees fold together.

Two enormous stumps: what were once enormous trees, are no longer still, but swell as the faint form of a body seems to be lifting them into motion. Both of these enormous Ash Trees were killed by the Ash Boring Beetle and felled by Owens when she acquired the land. Cutting these enormous trees down was a rigorous performance, and the sculptures remember the trees.

Truncated limbs become a tooth and a bent knee, snarled and sprouting mushroom adornments. The Maple tooth (Molar #3) was taken from a downed limb of a 60 year old Norwegian maple, and the knee: a branch of a large Ash that succumbed to the Ash Boring Beetle, a transplant of a global economy that has wiped out the North American Ash Tree. Its tiny boring holes have been illuminated in paint, becoming squiggly bug drawings. A pair of uprooted Yews lift a harvest of potatoes cast in resin and broken glass. The underworld has painted toenails and is rising to the occasion. Yews are referred to as the tree of death, poisonous to humans and to animals. This evergreen also contains chemicals used in anti-cancer drugs, but is perhaps most well-known as a popular topiary hedge for garden sculpture.

What appear to be three masks are placed on a shelf. Gloves are provided so that one might handle them, feeling their weight. These turn out to be the insides of masks worn by the artist during the pandemic. This is the space of her breath; a physical manifestation of air rendered in the most permanent of materials: bronze.

It's easy to forget that people have always been a part of nature, but when Owens shares these generous moments of intimacy with us throughout *Real Fragile*, it becomes just a little easier to notice.

Rachel Owens has been included in exhibitions both in the US and internationally including The X Krasnoyarsk Biennial, RU; Franco Soffiantino Contemporary, IT; Austrian Cultural Forum, NY; The Frist Museum, TN; Socrates Sculpture Park, LIC; and the New Museum Window, NY among others. In February of 2020, her solo museum show, *The Hypogean Tip* opened at The Housatonic Museum of Art in Bridgeport CT, and is currently on display at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum in NYC.

She has been written of in publications including *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Art in America*, *Modern Painters*, *Flash Art* and *Triple Canopy Anthology* and she has received grants from the Joan Mitchell, Pollack Krasner, and Harpo Foundations as well as a Cultural Humanitarian Grant from the US Consulate. Her work can be found in collections internationally, including The Beth Rudin Dewoody Collection and The Bunker, The Pritzker Family, Berkshire Botanical Garden, Housatonic Museum of Art, and the Sprint Collection. Owens is Associate Professor of Art & Design and Chair of the Sculpture Department at SUNY Purchase College.