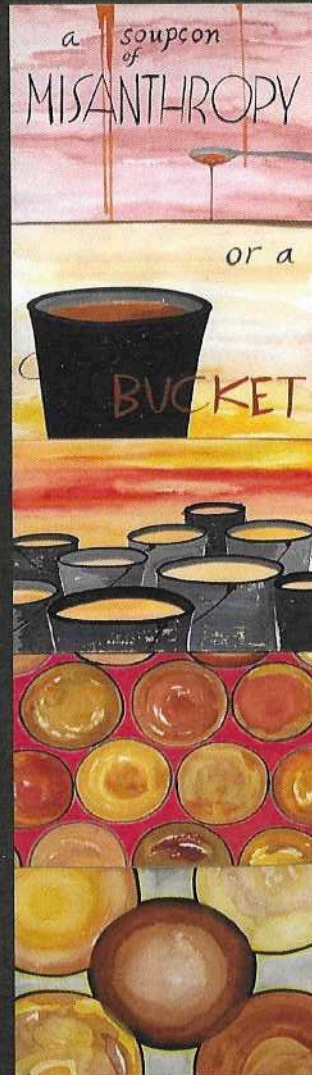


From top: *Dancing Bars*, gouache on paper, 10.9" x 19.3", 2022; *Interior Donuts*, gouache on paper, 12" x 16", 2022; *Quintet*, 12" x 16", gouache on paper, 2020

Front cover from top: *Smokin'*, 2019, watercolor on paper, 14" x 10"; *Mushroom Cloud*, 2019, watercolor on paper, 14" x 10".

Back cover: *Buckets*, gouache on paper, 60" x 12", 2021



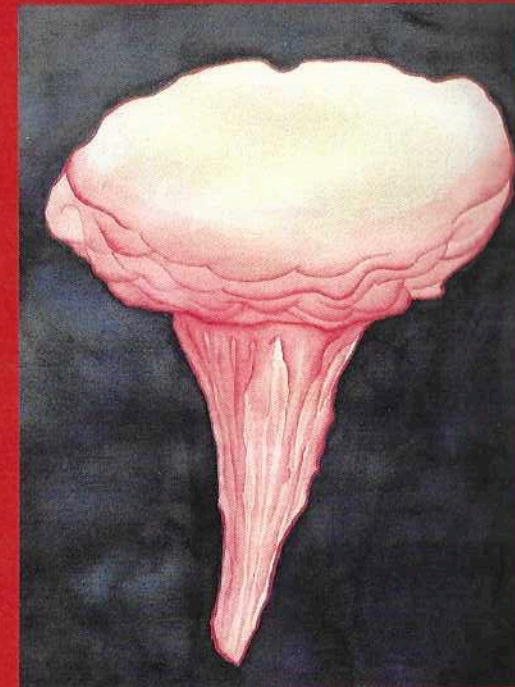
This essay and illustrations were designed to compliment Stefani Mar's exhibition *NATURED* May 24–July 1, 2023

at the  
Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba  
219 East 2nd Street, New York, NY 10009

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STEFANI MAR



## NATURED

Nature, a forever inspiration over decades, continues to inform Mar's creative production. Whether in a community garden near her studio in Alphabet City on Manhattan's Lower East Side, or her more *natured* existence in the Adirondacks of Upstate New York, she transports her sourced materials between the two. This was the pattern of her living while creating these works. Becoming *natured* was something of a goal for Mar's inspiration that brings these groupings of paintings together.

What comes to mind when thinking of *natured* as a state of being? How do we find a place for being with nature in our everyday lives? We may have a balcony, a roof garden, or care for a city tree bed. Community gardens and city parks provide an active social environment often busy with people. As city dwellers, to more fully inhabit our natural beings alone with hopes of becoming *natured*, and alone, we venture to rural areas

for more available space to commune with nature. A *souçon* of *misanthropy*?

Stefani Mar's *NATURED* presents a series of paintings on paper and mat board rendered in gouache that complement sculptural elements realized concurrently. The materials she creates with are as important and necessary as the imagery derived from her observations. Her interpretive imaginings all discovered in nature's earthly matter, in its natural environment at different points in time.

Finding solace alone in her journey begins in her upstate studio getaway in the Adirondacks with a series titled *Adirondack Life* (2019), on view in the rear west gallery. Fully formed clouds and the effects of weather patterns are visible. The interruption of rain and the flight of Dragonflies. Dragonflies remind us that in almost every part of the world, the Dragonfly is a symbol of change, transformation, self-realization, and adaptability.

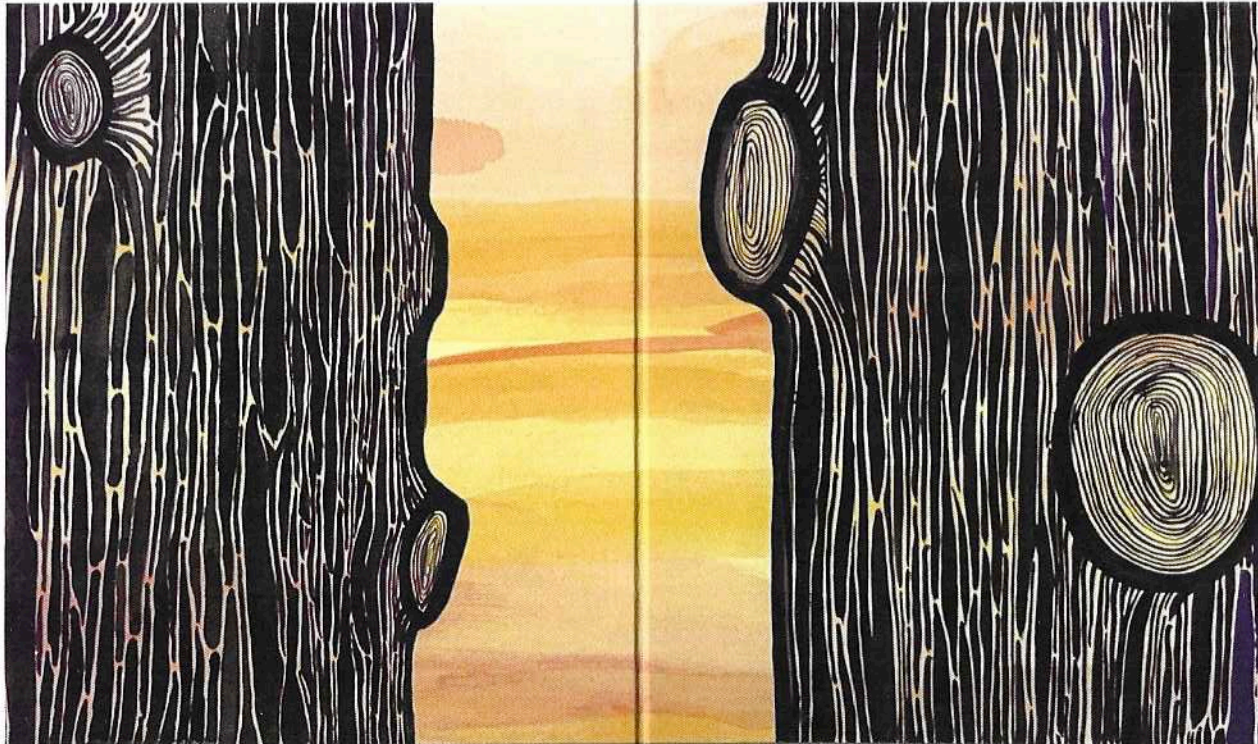
The change that is often referred to has its genesis in understanding the deeper meaning of life. What do we see hanging in the sky, the formation of clouds, the wind, rain. Now, what of the bloom of flowers, leaves, trees, roots, and branches. All of which, for Mar, inform worlds of wonder and what they can become.

Weather conditions are part of nature and affect the environment as well as our experience in nature. Inclement weather and the onset of Covid-19 brings Mar indoors, along with her thoughts on what nature has to offer in a series of primordial-shaped containers presented in *Containers* (2020). Made from earth's elements, possibly kiln fired or glazed, they are practical and useful for holding water, earth, plants, insects, and other elements of nature along with her thoughts.

*Tree Elegy* (2021) brings Mar back into a forest of trees. The counting of trees and how they group together. Stretching, reshaping, and warping tree trunks in an imagined but possible nature. Finding *Flow* (2022), inspired by volcano eruptions, has us dancing with patterns formed by striations in rock formations and the pattern of roots growing under a forest of trees. Underground roots brought over ground resting on a tower of pillows. And what of dancing bars on a lake, before the stillness—the calm meditateness of feeling *natured*.

Mar's observations more closely render a record of her solitude: creating *Remembering You* (2021) and *Remembering 2* (2022), displayed above a bedrock block excavated from a neighborhood construction site, on view in the rear east gallery, is one exemplary reminder. Having me now recognize that Mar's informing us how to survive in our urban landscape, we might consider having ourselves take heed to what *Lower the Bar for Utopia* (2022/23) has us consider.

—Sur Rodney (Sur)



*Tree Elegy 2*, gouache on board, 12.125" x 20.5", 2021.