

photograph

Tanya Marcuse: Fallen
 Julie Saul Gallery, New York



Tanya Marcuse, *Fallen* No 439, 2013. Courtesy Julie Saul Gallery

In *Fallen*, photographer Tanya Marcuse departs from her previous bodies of work, indexical documentations of individual trees, collections of wax anatomical and agricultural models, or archives of undergarments and armor, a 2002-2004 series she completed with a Guggenheim fellowship. There is nothing orderly about the luxuriant masses of rotting plants and flowers and decaying corpses of insects and other small creatures in *Fallen*, on view at Julie Saul through February 22. Assembled by Marcuse herself, each is a ground-level view of a Garden of Eden, after the Fall from Grace.

Marcuse is a graduate of Yale's MFA program, and at first glance, these photographs brought to mind some of

Gregory Crewdson's early works from his *Natural Wonder* series of the mid-1990s, of backyard plants, insects, and animals in a state of partial decay. But Marcuse's photographs are ultimately more | conceptual than narrative, and her references tend toward the painterly. Hieronymous Bosch's triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* casts a long shadow -- there's even a snake slithering through one of her photographs. The tradition of vanitas paintings comes to mind as well, with overly ripe fruits and half-eaten treats symbolizing the impermanence of life and the inevitability of death. Marcuse lives in the Hudson Valley, though, farm country in upstate New York, and that may have influenced her view of the cyclical nature of things. The dried leaves, apples, peaches, eggshells, and insect wings in her photographs form a tapestry of color and texture that suggests, more than anything, new life about to be nourished.

Fallen was inspired by an earlier series called *Fruitless*, in which Marcuse photographed fruit trees in Hudson Valley in different seasons. The platinum palladium prints each focused on a single tree, which was often surrounded by dropped fruit. In the series currently on view, Marcuse has turned from the trees to the ground below them, but her images are so vivid and rich, they favor potential over loss.



Tanya Marcuse, *Fallen* No 484, 2013. Courtesy Julie Saul Gallery

— By Jean Dykstra 01/16/2014