

Super Natural on view June 5 – September 13, 2015

Super Natural focuses on historical and contemporary women artists' unrestrained absorption with nature. Rather than merely document beauty, artists in the exhibition engage with the natural world as a space for exploration and invention.

Giving context to Organic Matters – Women to Watch 2015, also on view at NMWA, *Super Natural* comprises art from the museum's collection and private lenders. Featuring works by 25 artists, including Rachel Ruysch, Kiki Smith, and Sam Taylor-Johnson, the exhibition underscores the way that old mistresses' renderings of the natural world directly inspire artists today.

Because of their purported keen powers of observation and appreciation for beauty, women artists historically were encouraged to study plants. Like artists of any gender, however, women have always been attracted to nature's diversity, peculiarities, and uncontrollable power. Lavishly detailed still-life paintings and botanical studies by historical artists are juxtaposed with contemporary photographs, prints, and a video depicting fruits and flowers at monumental scale or consumed by decay.

A second section of *Super Natural* explores women artist' images of animals. Vivid prints by 17th-century artist-naturalist Maria Sibylla Merian depict insects she studied in Suriname, South America. Contemporary prints, artist's books, and a sculpture made from customized motor scooters depict spiders, reptiles, and hybrid beasts that evoke both wonder and fear.

In historical art, the female form often stood as the allegorical representation of Spring or the Earth. A final section of *Super Natural* is devoted to works by Janaina Tschape and Ana Mendieta, whose dramatic performances and interventions on the landscape each present a new vision of Mother Earth.

Super Natural is organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts and generously sponsored by Belinda de Gaudemar, with additional support provided by the members of NMWA.