



LIZ WARD

THE GROVE

May 13 – July 29, 2023

OPENING RECEPTION

Saturday, May 20, 5-8 pm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Holly Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce the representation of Liz Ward and the opening of *The Grove*, an exhibition of new works on paper by the celebrated San Antonio based artist. An opening reception for the artist will be held Saturday, May 20, from 5 - 8 pm.

The Grove is a group of works that began with transformative experiences in nature. Although Ward has travelled widely in Mexico throughout her life, she first swam in a cenote (underground pool) in the Yucatan in 2017. This literally immersive experience was the beginning of an obsession with cenotes. Sacred to the Maya, they were seen as portals to the underworld, and were often receptacles for sacrificial offerings.

As a summer resident of the remote Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Ward also has been profoundly influenced by the majesty of the boreal forest, and the ancient cultural meanings of trees. In *Weeping Willow*, a willow overhangs a cemetery of gravestone rubbings that the artist made in the historic Pine Grove Cemetery in Eagle Harbor. Plant imagery carved into the headstones offers consoling symbolism of resurrection and rebirth, while the willow tree itself embodies the human act of weeping for the dead.

The Strangler Fig was inspired by a five-week research trip to Costa Rica in summer 2021 with the artist and Trinity University. This species (*Ficus costaricana*) is a parasitic tree, which relies for its propagation on birds dropping its seeds into the canopy of the tropical forest. The seed grows from the top down and then up again, using the host tree as a support, and eventually strangling it. Apart from the strange beauty of these plants, one can imagine them as metaphors for the legacy of colonialism and unbridled resource extraction in all latitudes of the Americas.

As Simon Schama wrote in *Landscape and Memory*, "Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock." Like ancient myths of springs in sacred groves, this exhibition brings together representations of life-giving waters, resilient plants, the inevitability of death, and the persistence of nature. These are works the artist felt compelled to make as her own healing offerings to the world in defiance of the environmental degradation that now confronts us.

Liz Ward is an American artist who works across a range of media and processes including painting, drawing, printmaking, cyanotype, and collage. She produces large-scale mixed-media works on paper, as well as intimate silverpoint drawings, wall-sized installations, and public art projects for architectural settings. Her work explores the meaning of landscape through layers of human, natural, and environmental history, memory, and experience. Her combined interests in art and the environment have led to interdisciplinary collaborative teaching and research experiences with biologists, poets, and social scientists in Texas, Colorado and Costa Rica.

Ward has been included in over two-hundred group shows, and she has completed over thirty solo exhibitions in galleries, alternative spaces, and museums. Exhibition venues include the Contemporary Arts Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Weatherspoon Museum in North Carolina, and the International Print Center in New York. Her work is represented in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the San Antonio Museum of Art; the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio; the Blanton Museum at the University of Texas, Austin; the Library of Congress, and others.

Her work has been recognized with a Brown Foundation Fellowship for an Artist Residency at the Dora Maar House in Ménerbes, France; two Mid-America Arts Alliance/NEA Fellowships, and the Dozier Travel Award from the Dallas Museum of Art. She has been awarded residencies at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming, and Isle Royale National Park in Michigan.

Ward was born in Lafayette, Louisiana, and grew up in Houston, Texas. She attended the University of California, Santa Cruz, and received a B.F.A cum laude with honors in art from the University of New Mexico. After studying art in Paris, she returned to Houston, where she received an M.F.A. in painting from the University of Houston. She is a professor in the Department of Art and Art History, and an Environmental Studies Faculty member, at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She lives and works in San Antonio and in Eagle Harbor, Michigan.

Holly Johnson Gallery in the Design District is located at 1845 East Levee Street; Suite #100 in Dallas, TX 75207. Gallery hours are 11 to 5, Tuesday through Saturday. The gallery is a founding member of CADD - Contemporary Art Dealers of Dallas. For more information email info@hollyjohnsongallery.com or visit www.hollyjohnsongallery.com.

Image: *Cenote: Earth's Eye*, 2021, watercolor, gouache, pastel, and collage on Mexican amate paper, 45 ½ x 45 ½ inches