



TOUCHED NATURE

BLANE DE ST. CROIX, CORNELIA HESSE-HONEGGER, ALEXA HOYER AND
WEI XIAOQUANG

ON VIEW SEPTEMBER 8 – OCTOBER 14, 2017
OPENING RECEPTION SEPTEMBER 8, 2017 7 – 9 PM
FRIDAY – SUNDAY, 1 – 6 PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT

Untouched nature is a myth — a false hope driven by collective denial and nostalgia. The natural world is never free of human impact and agency. Pristine landscapes simply no longer exist. All nature has in fact been touched.

Fresh Window Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition entitled *Touched Nature* with works by artists Blane De St. Croix, Cornelia Hesse-Honegger, Alexa Hoyer and Wei Xiaoguang. Beautiful, uncanny and inquisitive, their work raises questions about our representations and beliefs of nature.

The sculpture *Pyramiden/Permafrost* by Blane De St. Croix is based on the settlement of Pyramiden, an abandoned soviet town and coal mining community in the Svalbard Archipelago. Started in 1927 to demonstrate that the utopian promise of communism could



literally reach all points on the globe. The experiment would not survive the harsh Arctic environment and depletion of natural resources. By 1998, the inhabitants were ordered to abandon the town, leaving an eerily preserved ghost town to bare witness to a failed ideology. On one side of the sculpture, pristine snow covers the iconic mountain peak that overlooks the town. The other side exposes a darker, dystopian underside; a dark cross-section of permafrost — earth that has been frozen for more than two consecutive years — summoning a ravaged landscape of spoilt resources and failed human conquest.

Cornelia Hesse-Honegger, a Zurich-based artist and scientific illustrator, has been examining malformations in insects since the 60s. In the 80s, after having found deformed insects in the fallout areas of Chernobyl and nuclear facilities in Switzerland and other parts of Europe, Hesse-Honegger grew interested in the question of long-lasting consequences of low-level radiation from nuclear facilities and the morphological health of Heteroptera true bugs after a nuclear accident.

Alexa Hoyer's "a Natural History" explores the fringes and minutiae of museum displays. At first glance, these images appear to be candid photographs of nature. Closer inspection reveals something uncertain and uncanny. Shot in the American Museum of Natural History, the photographs look beyond the spectacular centerpieces to focus on the details at the seam of the diorama where the sculptural recreations transition into the rendered background. Hoyer plays with the boundaries between the natural and artificial, challenging our perceptions of the natural world, and how we choose to understand it.

Wei Xiaoguang's mesmerizing paintings of fire capture this symbol of the primal force of nature. Unifying beauty and danger, fire also affects ecological systems around the globe, as an important process with both positive and negative effects. Wei's fire paintings navigates the delicate line, by adapting the alluring naturalist painting tradition onto this unsettling form.

*"If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees."*

—Rainer Maria Rilke