

## Art Trees Grow in the Asphalt Jungle

By CHARLOTTE BURNS | JULY 2, 2013



Zoe Leonard, *Red Apples*, 2002

The American musician and visual artist Michael Stipe is one of around 40 artists taking part in the exhibition “Something About a Tree” at New York’s Flag Art Foundation (10 July-7 September). The subject has proved surprisingly fertile. “I didn’t expect that there would be so many artists in the show—but I discovered that just about every artist who ever lived has made a tree work,” says the arts journalist (and contributor to *The Art Newspaper*) Linda Yablonsky, who has organised the show.

There are works by artists including Charles Ray, Sarah Lucas, Giuseppe Penone, Tacita Dean, Rodney Graham and Zoe Leonard (*Red Apples*, 2002), as well as by a notable figure of the 1960s music scene, Rory McEwen, whose hyperrealist paintings are also on show at Kew Gardens in London (until 22 September).

Some artists have made new works for the exhibition, including Oscar Tuazon, who has created a concrete and steel homage to trees (*Wet Rock*, 2013). Other works, such as a 10ft-tall prototype for a tree by Ugo Rondinone—*Bright Shiny Morning*, 1997—are on show for the first time. There is a range of photographic works, including Sally Gall’s *Thirst*, 2001, a gelatin silver-print image shot from the bottom of a cave into which a tree’s roots droop like stalactites.

Other pieces are more abstract, such as Stipe's New York Dolls, 2010, an installation involving a chair and a blown-up image of the cover of the glam-punk group's debut album. "I told him I was doing this show and he said he had a work he wanted to do," Yablonsky says.

The focus on trees was partly inspired by an interview with the artist Cyprien Gaillard that Yablonsky conducted two days before Glenn Fuhrman, the founder of the Flag Art Foundation, asked her to organise a show. Gaillard had shown Yablonsky a limited-edition artist's book that he had made of his nocturnal photographs of trees in Los Angeles (Nightlife, 2011, included in the show). "They were very moody and strange and quite beautiful, nearly abstract," she says. "I kept thinking about Tacita Dean's painted tree photographs and postcards, and wondered what other artists had done."

"I see trees everywhere now, in almost every exhibition," Yablonsky says. "A tree is a figure in a landscape; each one is different. They're magnificent when they're full or tall or old and extremely poignant when they are bare or dead. They die in the winter and come alive in the spring, which gives them a dimension of life that is uplifting. They provide oxygen for us to breathe; we can't live without them. And now I can't live without tree art."

# Gallerist

## “Something About a Tree”: Linda Yablonsky on her FLAG Art Foundation Show

By ANDREW RUSSETH | JULY 2, 2013



Ugo Rondinone, 'bright shiny morning,' 1997. (Courtesy the artist)

“I’ve always been fascinated by trees,” the writer Linda Yablonsky told *The Observer* last month by phone. “They’re figures in a landscape, they’re astonishing and magnificent when they’re full or they’re old or they’re tall, and in a winter landscape they can be quite poignant. They have personalities, they come from different parts of the world, and express something in nature that is very human. We cut them down. They give us oxygen. We climb them. They fall down on us. They’re part of our lives.”

She has taken those mysterious, multifarious plants as the theme for the summer show that she has organized at Chelsea’s Flag Art Foundation. “Something About a Tree,” the first major gallery exhibition that Ms. Yablonsky has ever curated, opens on the evening of July 10. Beyond her personal interest in the subject, she said that she was also inspired by recent discoveries, like the drawings and photographs of trees by Tacita Dean that Marian Goodman showed at her ADAA Art Show booth and a book of tree photos made by Cyprien Gaillard that she saw on a studio visit with him. The topic seemed to have some potential, but once she started selecting pieces, she was bowled over by the possibilities.

“It seemed to me that 98 percent of artists who ever lived have done a tree work!” she laughed. “Every time I mentioned the show to someone, they would come up with another artwork that they’d seen or that they’ve made that has a relationship to trees.”

That problem was no doubt exacerbated by the fact that Ms. Yablonsky is one of the better-traveled journalists on the international art circuit, regularly filing from fairs and festivals for *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* and *Artforum’s Scene & Herd* column. When we spoke, she was just back from a month in Europe that took her to Rome, Venice, Greece, London, Zürich, Basel and then London again. A few days after we spoke, she was off to Panama.

Though she planned to include about 20 artists in the show, she ended up with almost 50. Many are well known for tree works, like Zoe Leonard and Mitch Epstein, who have both done haunting photographs of them, and Ugo Rondinone, who's contributing the fiberglass prototype that he made in 1997 for what would become a popular series of tree sculptures. There will also be Charles Ray's famous snapshot of himself tied to a plank high up on a tree branch, a ghostly Robert Longo charcoal drawing of a French forest and a Tim Rollins & K.O.S. Pinocchio piece, a log adorned with two eyes—a tree gone anthropomorphic. And, of course, there will be a work by Giuseppe Penone, who has made his name with them. "I couldn't think of doing a tree show without him," Ms. Yablonsky said.

But there are also some surprising names, like Rory McEwen, the late father of the contemporary artist Adam McEwen who retired as a musician and television personality to make bracingly realistic botanical paintings. Adam's sister Samantha took Ms. Yablonsky to see them at London's Kew Gardens. "I was slayed by them," she said. "I said to Sam, 'I'm doing this tree show. I wish I could have one of these. I don't have anything like it, and no one in New York has ever seen these.'" It turned out that McEwen fils owns a few of them. Oscar Tuazon has made a new work that leans toward abstraction, and Jim Lambie, who's best known for his psychedelically colored taped floors, will make an appearance with one of the tree-ladder sculptures he has been making recently.

"There's a lot of vertical work in the show," Ms. Yablonsky said. "I guess I asked for that. I don't know how we're going to deal with that at the opening. There's so much on the floor."

While Ms. Yablonsky has a few curatorial credits to her name—a show at the pocket-sized Family Business gallery in Chelsea last year and a 2006 outdoor exhibition at the Anne Norton Sculpture Gardens, in Palm Beach, Flor.—this is her first full-on gallery show.

"I'm a little nervous," said added. "On the other hand, I'm very excited. I know the work, and I'm happy to put it together. I'm really grateful for the opportunity." She noted that she has spent years speaking with curators and watching them work. Now she has been asking them for advice. "I'm already thinking of the next show," she said. "Stones. I collect stones."

How does curating compare with writing? "It's a lot more fun," Ms. Yablonsky said without a moment's hesitation. "I love writing, don't get me wrong, but I sit alone at my desk in my apartment all day long talking to nobody. This is very engaging."

## HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

### Seeing the FLAG Art Foundation Through the Trees

By HILARY HARKNESS | AUGUST 20, 2013



Awol Erizku "Kwame On Lexington." Image courtesy the artist.

My girlfriend, who grew up in the suburbs of Manhattan, says that one of the earliest memories she has of her father, an art dealer, is him struggling to carry her four-year-old weight through the vast galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She and her dad would have been likely participants in The FLAG Baby Art History Program -- one Saturday a month, FLAG founder Glenn Fuhrman takes participants to visit museums and artist studios in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Art galleries and museums have been a part of my girlfriend's life from such a young age, that she moves through them easily.

For me, art galleries and museums have not always been so familiar or comfortable. While I've been a professional painter based in New York for a dozen years, at heart I'm still the kid who grew up in Michigan under the attentive eye of my own father, who took me camping, taught me how to reel in fish from lakes, and brought home rolls and rolls of paper from his job at a paper mill to indulge my growing art habit.

And so, I appreciate FLAG for its educational efforts and its friendly and unintimidating vibe. It's a great space to look at contemporary art. The director, Stephanie Roach and assistant director, Rebecca Streiman aren't sealed away in back offices, but rather installed in public spaces that you can't help but stroll through.

Stephanie and Rebecca can be counted on to answer questions about the artwork and are happy to accompany visitors through the galleries, which are located on the ninth and tenth floors of a contemporary building in the heart of Chelsea. There's even a set of tables on the upper floor that can be used to jot down notes or simply take a quiet moment of reflection.

When I went to FLAG in June for the opening of two shows currently on view through September 7 -- Something about a Tree curated by Linda Yablonsky and personal, political, mysterious, I hadn't been there since my own show closed in May. I was fresh off of a work trip to Kauai where trees were a large part of my observational painting studies. And even so, back in New York City I was continuing to dodge painting trees because it's too easy

to evoke anachronistic styles that can add an extra layer of content to a painting. I was curious to see how Yablonsky's roundup of painters were grappling with the "tree problem."

Like a good art adventure, I went in looking for one thing and left thinking about another. In *Something about a Tree*, it was the photographic work that caught my interest. "Taormina Tree" by Tacita Dean is a small sepia photograph of a banyan tree that appears to be smoothed out by centuries of storms. The tree is too big and foreign to have a personality, but it still crowds the picture plane, defying any narrative script or characters that might be larger than a tiny forest creature. All the negative space around the tree has been blocked out by white gouache, making this tree seem to exist outside of a knowable place and instead it seems to reside in a secret core of the universe -- perhaps a place even beyond death. It feels right that the photograph is actually a found postcard from another era, sent from one long-forgotten person to another.

This feeling of the beyond continued in a photograph by Sally Gall, where the viewer is transported to an underground cave, perhaps even crouching in its darkest corner. The only source of light is through a hole high in the ceiling through which the roots of a tree are streaming downward, beckoning you to scale them like Rapunzel's locks. If you were to ascend, would you find yourself in the world as you know it -- or in a fairytale world of indeterminate malice? Best perhaps to stay in the cave rather than risk the embrace of the tree's roots.

The thoughts *Something about a Tree* had swirling around in my head were quite welcome as I climbed the steps to the tenth floor and personal, political, mysterious. There, I found a piece that had a strong resonance to the trees shown on the floor below. "Kwame on Lexington" (pictured at top) by Awol Erizku features a young man sitting atop crossing signals with a boom box -- his own urban tree -- the stoop reconfigured. His position implies ownership, control. Whether you are directed to "walk" or "don't walk," he will control your soundtrack. His perch above the ground becomes the gravitational pole of a metropolis -- his is the origin of the culture of the city. He held me in his gaze gently, confronting me with the sublime as I exited FLAG, still not sure what to do about my "tree problem," but inspired by the visit nonetheless.





# GALLERISTny

A CHRONICLE OF THE ART WORLD  
IN NEW YORK AND BEYOND

## Trunk Show

"I've always been fascinated by trees," said the writer Linda Yablonsky. "They're figures in a landscape, they're astonishing and magnificent when they're full or they're old or they're tall, and in a winter landscape they can be quite poignant. They have personalities; they come from different parts of the world and express something in nature that is very human. We cut them down. They give us oxygen. We climb them. They fall down on us. They're part of our lives." They're also the subject of Ms. Yablonsky's first real foray into curating. Her exhibition, "Something About a Tree," opens this week at Chelsea's Flag Art Foundation.

Beyond her personal interest in the subject, she said that in assembling the show, she was also inspired by some of her recent discoveries, like the drawings and photographs of trees by Tacita Dean that Marian Goodman showed at the ADAA Art Show fair in March and a book of Cyprien Gaillard's tree photos that she spotted in his studio. "It seemed to me that 98 percent of artists who ever lived have done a tree work," she said. "Every time I mentioned the show to someone, they would come up with another artwork that they'd seen or that they've made that has a relationship to trees."

Being one of the better-traveled journalists on the international art circuit—she regularly files from fairs and festivals for *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* and *Artforum's* Scene & Heard column—Ms. Yablonsky has ended up hearing about a lot of trees. Though she planned to include about 20 artists in the show, she wound up with almost 50. Many are well known for tree works, like Zoe Leonard and Mitch Epstein, who have both done haunting photographs of them, and Ugo Rondinone, who's contributing the fiberglass prototype that he made in 1997 for what has since become a popular series of tree sculptures. And, of course, Giuseppe Penone, who has made his name with his own tree sculptures. "I couldn't think of doing a tree show without him," Ms. Yablonsky said. (Mr. Penone's are having a moment in New York: Madison Square Park's art program just announced that it will host three of his large bronze sculptures of trees, which support large river stones in their branches, from Sept. 26, 2013, through Feb. 9, 2014.) There will also be Charles Ray's famous snapshot of himself tied to a tree branch, a ghostly Robert Longo charcoal drawing of a French forest, and a Tim Rollins and K.O.S. piece called *Pinocchio*, a log adorned with two eyes.

But there are also some surprising names, like British artist Rory McEwen, the late father of the contemporary artist Adam McEwen. Mr. McEwen *père* retired as a musician and television personality to make bracingly realistic botanical paintings. Adam's sister Samantha took Ms. Yablonsky to see them at London's Kew Gardens. "I was slayed by them," she said. "I said to Sam, 'I'm doing this tree show. I wish I could have one of these. I don't have anything like it, and no one

in New York has ever seen these."

Oscar Tuazon has made a new work that leans toward abstraction, and Jim Lambie, who's best known for his psychedelic floors made from colored tape, has contributed one of the tree-ladders he's been making recently. "There's a lot of vertical work in the show," Ms. Yablonsky sighed. "I guess I asked for that." Maybe that has something to do with her thoughts for a next theme. "Stones. I collect stones."

Ms. Yablonsky has a few curatorial credits to her name—a show at the pocket-sized Family Business gallery in Chelsea last year and a 2006 outdoor exhibition at the Anne Norton Sculpture Gardens in Palm Beach, Fla.—but this is her first full-scale gallery show. "I'm a little nervous," she admitted. How does curating compare with writing? "It's a lot more fun," she said without a moment's hesitation. "I love writing, don't get me wrong, but I sit alone at my desk in my apartment all day long talking to nobody." —Andrew Russett

## Better Bureau

Since opening in 2007, the enterprising Lower East Side gallery Bureau has operated out of a roughly 250-square-foot space on Henry Street. Last year, the gallery's proprietor, Gabrielle Giattino, decided it was time for a change and started looking for larger spaces, and she recently found one. In the fall, after renovations, she plans to move Bureau into a 1,800-square-foot space at 178 Norfolk Street between Stanton and Houston, next to the Angel Orensanz Foundation's Gothic Revival home and just around the corner from Participant Inc.

A friend tipped Ms. Giattino off about the former flower shop, which has vaulted brick ceilings and a small back garden. "It has such a great feeling," she said. "We had seen so many spaces, and just walked in, and I wanted to make an offer right away."

She plans to inaugurate the space with an exhibition of work by artist Tom Holmes, who makes sculptures that render the traditional objects of cemeteries and funerals, like urns and grave-stones, in unusual and sometimes humorous ways. For the exhibition, "he's actually buying a funeral home and a graveyard in Tennessee to work in and to make this kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*," Ms. Giattino said. "He's really taking it all the way."

Bureau is the latest gallery to settle on the northeastern boundary of the L.E.S. art district. As boutique hotels and pricey restaurants and bars increasingly dominate the neighborhood, the art district, it seems, is seeking refuge to the east. JTT and Show Room recently opened one block to the east of Bureau's new location, on Suffolk, and in the past year, both Lisa Cooley and Lauren Gitlen have relocated from the main artery of the district, around Orchard Street, to a stretch of Norfolk just south of it. —A.R.



PAUL BRUNO/GEFFREY/REYNOLDS/ILLUMIN.COM



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK HANLEY GALLERY

From top: Linda Yablonsky; *Sisters columnar with difference* (2012) by Jessica Rath.



bright shiny morning (1997) by Ugo Rondinone.

PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTIST'S STUDIO



# VOGUE DAILY

## Nine Reasons to Stay in New York this Labor Day Weekend

By ARDEN WOHL | AUGUST 27, 2014



8  
STATE OF  
THE ART

Pictured: "Something About a Tree" at The FLAG Art Foundation, curated by Linda Yablonsky.

The FLAG Art Foundation, founded by **Glenn Fuhrman** and run by **Stephanie Roach**, is a fantastic public/private concept of displaying contemporary art: **Chuck Close** curated their first show. I always try to catch their exhibits—last time I was there I ran into designer **Rick Owens**.

Note: FLAG will close at 2:30 p.m. on August 30 and reopen after Labor Day on September 3.