

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

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Seams Complicated

By Emma Silvers

In an age when technology reigns and the messiness of handmade process is not usually celebrated, new art show **Seam-ingly** is refreshing. At 21 Grand, textile sculptor Sarah Wagner and photographer Cynthia Yardley home to make viewers think about obvious seams and connecting lines-their function in art as well as in the natural world.

Wagner's fantastical burlap and silk sculptures, part of her ongoing series *The Invisible Healing World*, take their inspiration from nature. In one, large cloth peonies appear to have stiletto heels instead of stamens. "It's a sort of joke," she says. "Like, what is a peony were trying to become more feminine? I've got a lot of concerns about genetic modification and endocrine disruption, and that's sort of the conceptual basis where the pieces come from." Wagner made the decision to use only biodegradable fabrics in her art after ten years of working in construction and getting sick from toxic resins and other materials. She now uses silk organza and burlap sacks donated from coffee companies- "the fanciest of the fancy and the most mundane at the same time"-to create oversize extravagant renderings of plant life that, she hopes, will leave viewers with "a feeling, an undercurrent."

That sense of wanting the viewer to slow down and consider the materials at play is echoed in Yardley's photograph series *Sky Weave*. Aside from taking landscape photos that have no horizon line, she disorients the viewer further by literally taking pictures apart. She makes multiple prints of each photo, cuts them into strips, and then weaves them back together. "Process is huge for me," she says. The effect is dizzying as well, a sprawl of blue and white that comes more clearly into focus the farther away the viewer stands. The disorientation, the artist explains, is somewhat deliberate: "I want people to look harder and slower. I think looking at photographs is similar to reading in a sense-when you see a word, your brain reads the first few letters and makes an assumption about what the rest of the word is. Because I've seen so much photography I tend to do the same thing, glance once and think I know the whole story. I'd like to encourage a visual slowing down."