

## ***Garden School***

**Angelina Gualdoni**

**Pareesa Pourian**

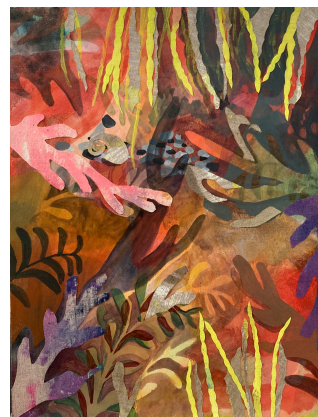
**Lauren Portada**

**Padma Rajendran**

**Alexandria Tarver**

Curated by **Emily Burns**, in collaboration with  
**Maake**

On View: October 2, 2020 - November 21, 2020



LAUREN PORTADA  
*Tide Pool (12 noon)*, 2020. 22 x 17 in.  
Acrylic and painted collaged textiles on linen

Trestle Gallery is pleased to present *Garden School*, an exhibition curated by Emily Burns, featuring Angelina Gualdoni, Pareesa Pourian, Lauren Portada, Padma Rajendran, and Alexandria Tarver. The exhibition is in collaboration with Maake, and is part of Artist-Run 2020, a year-long exploration of artist-run projects throughout the country. Maake is an artist-run organization that publishes a print publication featuring the work of contemporary artists and artist-run projects, and curates exhibitions in collaboration with galleries across the country, as well as their exhibition space, Maake Projects. As part of Artist-Run 2020, Maake collaborated with Trestle Gallery to produce a special edition print issue featuring interviews with the artist-run projects involved.

"This garden does not whet your appetite; but quenches it. Nor does it make you more thirsty with every drink; it slakes the thirst with a natural cure—a cure that requires no fee. It is with this type of pleasure that I have grown old."

—Seneca, writing about *The Garden*, the school founded by Epicurus.

*Garden School* features the work of five artists who make paintings that explore the subjects of plants and nature from distinct perspectives. Plants can provide healing, solace, beauty, connection—and much like nature, a painting can become a thicket in which to reckon with tangled ethos.

In a moment of global uncertainty and climate anxiety, the pandemic has ushered in a fresh wave of insecurities, while disconnecting us from one another on an epic scale. How have recent events rekindled innate desires to reconnect with the natural world? Forest bathing—the concept that humans can be healed or nurtured psychologically by proximity to nature, through a primarily visual experience—is recreated here, as a sensual substitute—an oasis vitalized by verdant shamans in the midst of the New York cityscape.

Lauren Portada recalls thinking—go to the plants—feeling the deep-seated desire to be with the green and growing. She describes the memory of her mother, who felt the same yearning upon immigrating from her lush native Cuba to the United States. Her recent paintings and works on paper explore the miniature worlds of tidepools. The muse of the late climate activist Rachel Carson, tidepools offer mysterious and vibrant ecosystems that echo humans trapped in quarantine—reliant on outside forces and rhythms for survival.

Angelina Gualdoni's work reimagines how the pictorial tradition could sway our perceptions—toward real, critical approaches that place humans in the role of collaborator, working harmoniously with ecosystems to reinvent our part within perilous ecological circumstances, rather than the ubiquitous false fantasies of Eden or clichés of an all-generous earth. Her paintings of medicinal herbs—real and imagined—become vectors of magical thinking and healing.

Pareesa Pourian paints flowers—with an air of playful doodles, and reminiscent of colorful patterns adorning textiles and bedsheets. For her, visual ideas come from nature. She captures the sensuality innate in her subject, through the luscious texture of the paint.

Padma Rajendran finds comfort in plants and trees—while mourning the charred landscape of the western coast of the US, making the contradictions of access and destruction persist in her consciousness. She invites the viewer to enter a chromatic expanse of dyed fabric, not without contradictions itself. Quilt-like fragments of botanical patterns create borders that enclose natural sites—illuminating and questioning those barriers that occur not only for preservation, but also serve as an intentional impasse to specific communities.

Alexandria Tarver can't separate herself from her subject matter of plants and flowers after the passing of her father. The plants—often obtained from her local corner grocer in Brooklyn—provide solace. A response to the circumstances of life, these nighttime paintings glow with the soft bloom of hopeful mourning.