

SPRING/BREAK art show  
625 Madison Ave  
September 6 – September 11, 2023  
Booth 1051

## *Secret Garden*

*Secret Garden* is an exhibition that delves into the realms of the hidden and the revealed, the public and private, the interior and exterior, and the metaphorical escape from the brutality of the world.

Our presentation is inspired by the Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire, his famous novel *Candide*, and the final message of the book: *We must cultivate our own garden.*

He shared the same thought in a letter: “Life is bristling with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to cultivate one’s garden.”

In *Candide*, the protagonists travel the world and barely survive many horrors—earthquakes, tsunamis, abductions, rapes, and tortures. Initially, the wide-eyed and optimistic Candide subscribes to his mentor Pangloss’s philosophy, believing *that this world is “the best of all possible worlds.”* However, as he witnesses and endures numerous tragedies, and eventually settles into a relatively safe and idle lifestyle on a small farm, he starts questioning the purpose of life. Working and cultivating one’s garden becomes a unique solution that according to Voltaire *keeps off three great evils - idleness, vice, and want.*

The unsettling events depicted in the 18th-century novel bear an uncanny resemblance to the recent turmoil plaguing our world—the devastating pandemic, warfare, mass migrations, mass shootings, global warming, and extreme weather patterns. Yet, amidst these crises, the act of cultivating our gardens emerges as a courageous and empowering solution.

Gardens hold a special place in our collective consciousness—they are lovingly crafted spaces designed to bring joy and tranquility. They can be both public and private, often concealed from prying eyes, offering a haven of escape, seclusion, and personal delight.

It is no coincidence that historically, the designated place of paradise was the *Garden of Eden*, immortalized in numerous Renaissance paintings depicting Adam and Eve reveling in idyllic settings. This narrative culminates in the turning point for humanity—the *expulsion from the Garden of Eden*—exquisitely captured by early Renaissance artist Masaccio.

Renaissance painters frequently employed gardens as metaphors for paradise and the joys of life, emphasizing the select few who could access such blissful realms.

Voltaire implores us to transcend passivity and despair and urges us to proactively create our own gardens. This endeavor often begins as a personal narrative, demanding practical effort long before we might see our gardens blossoming.

Artists in our proposals cultivate their gardens – often both metaphorically and pictorially in their art.

**Matt Coombs** is a landscape painter, who has also worked as a landscaper. He creates paintings and drawings that depict a fluidity between the figurative, the synthetic, and the natural environment. Much of the imagery that he uses comes from his upbringing in the Burned-Over District of Upstate NY. This region was known for a wave of apocalyptic Christian movements in the early Nineteenth Century and was also the birthplace of American Spiritualism.

**Haley Hayden's** oeuvre fixates literally and figuratively on the self-portrait or artist-autobiography. Gardens also play an important role in her paintings - playing a metaphorical role in the placement of her characters. Hayden's artistic practice revolves around the exploration of personal narratives, relationships, and the everyday struggles of life. Through her paintings, she delves into the multifaceted nature of human experiences.

**Kariny Padilla's** intimate paintings of her inner circle capture the essence of the *Secret Garden* concept. Her works depict a carefully guarded personal space and close interpersonal connections. She creates a safe and protected world *where she and her friends are allowed to be naive, comfortable, mischievous, tender, caring, unfixed, and un-surveilled.*

**Maria Petrovskaya** is a multidisciplinary artist working in sculpture and painting. In her practice, she explores the human body, color, and the intersection of 3D and 2D worlds. Her works are subconscious manifestations of her psyche, expressed through small automatic clay sculptures and automatic drawings that eventually get enlarged. They are based on automatism and the Dada movement.

**Horacio Quiroz** constructs fantastical worlds that oscillate between the bucolic and the hellish. His paintings merge the materiality of impasto oil paint and voluptuous 3D forms with surreal and ethereal narratives, resulting in a mesmerizing phantasmagoria that defies conventional categorization.

**Nefertiti Jenkins'** paintings blur the lines between public and private, the interior and exterior, real and imaginary. She starts her work with concrete images of past events, her friends, and real-life scenes, that eventually get pictorially distorted through the prism of time, her selective memory, and the infusion of her domestic environment. Jenkins creates dream-like indeterminate depictions of what may have occurred.