

Matt Wedel's Garden of Massive Ceramics Takes Root in L.A.

ARTSY EDITORIAL
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Installation view of "Matt Wedel: Peaceable Fruit" at L.A. Louver, Los Angeles. Courtesy of L.A. Louver and the artist.

Matt Wedel's ceramic garden of unearthly delights packs L.A. Louver in Venice to the brim—prepare to be confronted by giant overgrown banana trees, disembodied heads, and ribbony flowers. The title of the show, "Peaceable Fruit," is a play on Quaker painter Edward Hicks's

“The Peaceable Kingdom” series—over 60 paintings of bucolic Biblical scenes made in the first half of the 20th century. Wedel’s version imagines a trippier, somewhat creepier, and much more pastel-colored scene.



Matt Wedel
Banana Tree, 2015
L.A. Louver



Matt Wedel
Figure with child, 2015
L.A. Louver

Wedel works with a giant kiln in his Ohio studio, and in fact the scale of the ceramic, porcelain, and stoneware pieces is the first thing viewers will note. *Banana Tree* (2015), which opens the exhibition on the first floor, is six-feet tall and weighs nearly a ton. Other works are imposing, especially considering their bizarre content—*Figure with heads* (2015), shows a figure with a blank expression bending over, the figure’s robust buttocks pointed to the sky, protecting (or inspecting) a panoply of severed heads. Nearby, a gold-leaf-plated figure leans on shrubbery with a small child figure lying at his feet. Another figurative sculpture is painted bronze—Wedel’s ceramics often take on the look of other materials.



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Matt Wedel
Head, 2015
L.A. Louver



Matt Wedel
Flower Tree, 2015
L.A. Louver

These figurative sculptures are at times classical, particularly the busts in an adjoining gallery space, but there is something disconcerting and modern about the facial features. *Heads* (2015) features eight busts grafted onto a ceramic “canvas” and hung high above the gallery, their expressionless faces looking down in judgment.



Matt Wedel
Flower Tree, 2015
L.A. Louver



Matt Wedel
Flower Tree, 2015
L.A. Louver

Upstairs, more “flower trees” take over the gallery like an overgrown forest, their tendrils knotted in a mass, the pastel colors covered in the same snotty glaze texture that covers each piece. In the gallery’s skyroom (a small terrace on the second floor), a flower tree snakes in on itself. On a cool, dark November day, Wedel’s ceramics feel thoroughly alive; eerie and weird, but amazing too. “Peaceable Fruit” is a wonderland, giving the show the feel of a stroll through a different, perhaps prehistoric world.



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—Maxwell Williams

"Matt Wedel: Peaceable Fruit" is on view at L.A. Louver, Los Angeles, Nov.

18-Dec. 30, 2015.

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