

# MATT WEDEL

*Everything is everything*



14 NOVEMBER 2018 – 5 JANUARY 2019

RECEPTION FOR THE ARTIST:  
WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER, 6-8PM

**Venice, CA** -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition of new ceramic sculptures by Ohio-based artist Matt Wedel. Using sculptural formality as a basis for painterly abstractions, the artist navigates between these two impulses in his stylized flower and figurative forms.

“Dealing with culture in the context of nature and landscape, these newer works are an extension of exploring paint as sculpture, as well as sculptural action. As these parameters collapse, you enter this way of thinking: ‘Everything is painting, and at the same time, everything is an act of sculpting.’” – Matt Wedel

Wedel’s subjects suggest the natural world and classical figuration through representations of flowers, trees, landscapes and portrait heads. In a sequence of modestly-scaled *Flower tree* sculptures, the artist begins the table top forms by creating multi-leaved plants in monochrome white porcelain. Atop these structures Wedel daubs vibrantly colored abstract swaths of porcelain, like heavily impastoed paint. As if captured in suspended motion, the color configurations appear freshly bestowed, partially obscuring the meticulously articulated petals that lie beneath.

Wedel uses a similar technique to address a series of small *Portrait* sculptures, each proportioned to that of a human head. Indistinct facial features are evinced through the smudged application of vividly pigmented porcelain on foundations of the same material. Impressionistic and reductive, each smear of color is measured and deliberate, as if striving for identity and recognition.

Several large sculptures punctuate the gallery space. Resembling a wild labyrinth of tangled vines, *Fruit landscape(s)* are shaped from draping mounds of collapsed ribbon-like tendrils. Returning to glazed finishes, Wedel’s unwieldy overgrown forms are balanced with a subdued treatment of color -- one features a family of grays and whites, another blush pinks, reds and soft yellows, and the largest (measuring nearly 8 ft/2.5 m tall) a speckled finish of diluted cobalt blue. Their immense weight, stature and towering energy seem directly aligned with the stacked sculptures by visionary ceramicist Peter Voulkos (1924-2002). “To me, [Voulkos] was challenging the entire history of ceramics,” states Wedel. “I enjoy figures in art that hold so much power as makers.”



Glazed color is also evocatively expressed in *Lemon tree*. Modeled in high relief, clusters of lemons sprout from curvaceous hawser-shaped branches that emerge from a flattened wall formation. In this instance, color is delineated to form. Against a white background, lemons are contrasted in a ripened luscious yellow with a verdant system of stems that tonally, conjure the works of Renaissance Florentine sculptor Luca Della Robbia (1399/1400-1482) – most noted for his technical achievements in ceramic production, particularly with glazing techniques.

While painterly surfaces are heightened in most works, sculptural form continues to be at the core of Wedel's practice. In fact, two *Flower tree* wall constructions are devoid of any color. Sculpted from porcelain, the pristine unfinished surfaces bring the fragility of their material and form into greater scrutiny. Fecund flowers bloom from twisted stalks that topple from the weight of their own growth, struggling to climb. Resting against a footed slab, the foliage relies on this underlying architectural structure to remain intact and upright -- a symbolic reference to the coexistence of humans and

the environment, or as Wedel describes a "reconciliation between culture and the natural world." In his words, "They are whimsical, threatening and cautious symbols, reminding us to be caretakers of humanity and the earth."

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**Matt Wedel** was born and raised in Palisade, Colorado, and first began working with clay at the age of two. Under the guidance of his father, a functional ceramicist, Wedel developed an early passion for making sculpture. He earned a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, and an MFA from California State University, Long Beach where he studied with Tony Marsh. Wedel went on to teach at the University, and has since taught at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, University of Colorado, Boulder and Ohio University, Athens. In early 2012, Wedel moved with his family to Albany, Ohio, where he built his own studio and an oversized kiln.

Wedel's work has gained national attention with inclusion in group exhibitions at Ellis Armory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2008; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 2009; 67th Scripps Annual, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Claremont, California, 2011; Brevard Art Museum, Melbourne, Florida, 2011; Stone Gravy, curated by David Pagel, Ameringer McEnery Yohe Fine Art, New York, 2012; Descanso Gardens, La Cañada, Flintridge, California, 2013; Arizona State University Museum, Tempe, 2013; the Foundation d'entreprise Bernardaud, Limoges, France, 2017; Omi International Art Center, Ghent, New York, 2017; Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 2018; American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA, 2018; and CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art, Middlefart, Denmark, 2019 (forthcoming).

Visit [lalouver.com/wedelevrything](http://lalouver.com/wedelevrything) for a new short film on the artist.

Concurrently on view:

GROUP SHOW (Second floor gallery)

Richard Deacon, Iva Gueorguieva, Jonathan Lasker, Heather Gwen Martin, Jason Martin, Juan Uslé and Leslie Wayne

ALEX "DEFER" KIZU (Skyroom)

*Extended through 5 January 2019*

pictured:

(above) *Flower tree*, 2018, porcelain, 51 x 40 x 20 in. (132 x 101.6 x 50.8 cm)

(reverse, left to right) *Portrait*, 2018, porcelain, 11 1/4 x 7 x 7 1/2 in. (28.6 x 17.8 x 19.1 cm)

*Flower tree*, 2018, porcelain, 11 x 14 1/2 x 14 1/2 in. (27.9 x 36.8 x 36.9 cm)