



GALLERIST Q&A: HANNAH HOFFMAN AND ERIN FALLS

The best gallery show in **Los Angeles** right now comes from the newest kid on the block. Situated on Highland Avenue, near to the recent Hollywood gallery migration, [Hannah Hoffman Gallery](#) is exhibiting a four-person show organized by the artists, who, like Hoffman, are all recent transplants to Los Angeles.

Sam Falls contributes paintings made by leaving pigments on a canvas in the rain, giving them a beautifully spontaneous watercolor wooziness. **Jacob Kassay** has dug interactive depressions into the concrete floor of the gallery, up to six feet in depth. **Matt Sheridan Smith** has placed poisonous plants on platforms with casters (and one inside of one of Kassay's depressions). And **Joe Zorrilla** has dribbled honey on a Plexiglas plate and hung it below a skylight, casting a golden hue on the gallery.

The show is loosely based in "New Naturalism," and each of the works in the show is somehow in touch with natural elements or processes. Hoffman, who is a former associate at Gavin Brown's enterprise as well as the daughter of prominent Dallas collectors, is young and vibrant, and the whole deal comes out as gleefully organic. Hoffman's gallery is split into several exhibitions rooms, and her desk is situated right at the front, where she sits across from her director, **Erin Falls**, who is also the wife of Sam.

The three of us chatted about the current exhibit, and what it means to open a new gallery in Los Angeles in 2013.

WHITEWALL: Why did you decide to move from New York out to L.A. and start a gallery?

HANNAH HOFFMAN: There was something happening in New York as I was leaving with Alex Zachary and Peter Currie's space and Amy Greenspon's space, which she has with Mitchell Albus. They came from [other galleries]—Alex worked at Gavin's, Amy was at Marianne Boesky's—and they stepped out on their own and were able to put together a program that had something to add to the conversation. It made me think about what kind of shows I would do if I were to have a gallery—the Mira Schendel show for instance. But I knew that I didn't want to be in New York.

WW: Did it feel crowded in New York because of your peers' galleries?

HH: L.A. felt open-ended. To start with more of a mid-level, mid-size gallery, I couldn't do that in New York. One, because I couldn't afford to, and two, because it wouldn't make sense.

WW: You moved to Hollywood, which seems like the right move to make these days.

HH: It just seemed like there is a lot of potential and a lot of energy, especially in these couple of blocks. It really reminds me of what Chelsea felt like in the mid-'90s, where you would go there and be like, "I can't believe that this is the new gallery place." It's still a little crazy, but then you slowly see it happening, and you're like, "Oh this is actually going to be really cool."

ERIN FALLS: There's good spaces here for doing it. The zoning is right for the type of spaces, larger industrial spaces that galleries need.

WW: Why do a gallery now?

HH: I wanted to do shows with artists that I love, like Mira Schendel or Jorg Immendorf, which is our next show—or [the current show with] Sam Falls or Jacob Kassay or Matt Sheridan-Smith or Joe Zorrilla. Something happens when you go through the process of putting an exhibition together, where you come out on the other end with this completely different level of understanding about the work. That process is so rewarding for me. There was a moment when everyone really hated on galleries in 2008. They were talking about how elitist they are. And Jerry Saltz wrote, "Galleries are public. You get to walk into a space without paying any admission, without anything being asked of you, and you get to look at art that people really cared about. And that's amazing." He so clearly articulated it.

WW: Can you tell me what you've carried over with you from Gavin Brown's?

HH: When I moved to New York, I had met Gavin once in Dallas, and called him up out of the blue—I was 22—and I said, "Hey, we met in Dallas, and I'm moving to New York. Do you want to have dinner?" He was like, "Sure." I didn't know what I was doing. [Later], I was at a dinner, watching him talk to someone else who was young, and him still being so open, and I remember thinking, "This is why Gavin is so great, because he's—I don't know how old he is—and he continues to be so curious."

I feel like that openness is something in him that I really admire and it's something that I actively try to cultivate. Also, he's such a true believer, and not everyone's like that.

With this show in particular, I was just like, "Whatever you want." That's why I have the gallery, so that I have the opportunity to support people in that way and engage in that way.

WW: You have a particular way of approaching art. Can you describe that?

HH: My parents are collectors, and so I just have always grown up with art. I opened up a gallery, because I have to live with art, and I just don't have the money to be an art collector. This gives me the opportunity to wake up and live a life around it, and I do think that there's something really beautiful in letting your relationship to art become casual. It becomes a landscape that you're living life around.

WW: How did the current show come about?

EF: Sam and I had this discussion of doing this "New Naturalist" show. We weren't sure where we wanted to do it. Then I started working with Hannah, and I said, "Sam has this idea." She said, "Yeah, let's do it."

HH: This idea of inviting people into the gallery, shifting around their contribution to it—at a certain point, it's completely out of my hands. It was this amazing manifestation of that: to start working with Erin, and her have this amazing idea, and getting into these conversations with Sam, and talking with him about what it means to him to be in L.A., and letting Sam and Jacob and Joe and Matt come into the space and really do an exhibition that came from them.

WW: One of the things I noticed is that there's not a lot of literature about the show. The press release is very uninformative, but there are a lot of intuitive moments.

EF: The dialogue between them is really natural, and I think that they just didn't feel like it needed anything else. There's a lot of room for you as the viewer to make a lot of the connections yourself. That being said, there are some really obvious connections, like [one of Matt Sheridan Smith's] plants is planted in one of Jacob Kassay's depressions, which happened really naturally the day before we were opening. It just was really casual, the decisions that they made, and that's why it looks so good and so pertinent.

[Art](#)

By Maxwell Williams

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