



View of “Judy Fox,” 2019. On wall, from left: *EdenPlant 9*, 2018; *EdenPlant 10*, 2018; *EdenPlant 14*, 2019. Foreground: *Eve*, 2014–17.

Judy Fox

NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY

Crepuscular, cancerous, unclean: Judy Fox’s eerie, life-size effigy of a dead *Snow White*, 2007, is nothing like Disney’s apple-cheeked version of the tortured young blueblood. Fox’s is grim—authentically Grimm—decked out in long, weedy braids and lying nude atop her glass coffin, surrounded not by seven mournful dwarves but by queasy, gonadal sculptures with tits for legs, physical manifestations of Christianity’s capital sins. Many moons ago, when I first encountered this tableau at New York’s P.P.O.W gallery, I was overtaken by the exquisiteness of Fox’s installation. Yet the artist’s black magic did me in something terrible. I couldn’t help but stare at the princess’s labia, so oddly and tenderly wrought, framed by a modest thicket of hair. I felt like a bad man, ashamed that I could not avert my eyes from the hard-core sculptural punctum between the girl’s legs.

“Garden”—Fox’s feminist kinking of Eden at Nancy Hoffman Gallery—was another opportunity to bask in the artist’s splendid craftsmanship and perverse imagination. For more than three decades, her ceramics have reconfigured bodies—human and otherwise—in order to retell some of the world’s oldest tales and creation myths, from pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and medieval Europe to ancient Greece and Egypt. The sculptor’s jaunt into

the Book of Genesis, for instance, blithely ignored a wrathful God, and her sculpture *Eve*, 2014–17, certainly didn't look like the product of His divine afterthought, either. Fox's Eve is a cool character with thick, winding locks and *no* fig leaves. Her gaze is determined, cutting. Though she's less than five feet high, her presence filled the front half of the gallery. She is not, however, a Western, white-skinned interpretation of the first female, but is modeled after a figure of southern Mesopotamia, now known as Iraq, where some biblical scholars believe Eden might have been located. Nearby was *Snake Tree*, 2015–19, a topiary that bears no fruit, but gives the impression that it is rich with forbidden knowledge. Its trunk is the color of a bruised dick, while its crown, a massively tangled serpent, gives way to a tiny crimson snake head, more meditative than malevolent.

Surrounding this pair of works were several “EdenPlants,” 2016–19, a series of objects fashioned to look like carnal and carnivorous breeds of greenery. Among them were *EdenPlant 9*, 2018, and *EdenPlant 14*, 2019. The former has the look of a giant squirting joke flower with five vulvar petals surrounding a clitoral appendage; the latter, an amalgamation of diseased intestines and some species of viola, features a set of creepily sensuous petal lips that delicately jut out from a fat green stalk. Affixed to an adjacent wall was a pair of trilobite-like creatures in pink and green: *EdenPlant 4*, 2016, and *EdenPlant 11*, 2019. These ruffly, feminine things called to mind a set of frilly boudoir pillows from a Fragonard painting, or parasitic sex monsters out of an early David Cronenberg movie. They were some of the weirdest sisters in the show, very pretty and oh so dangerous.

Another pair of siblings appeared in the second half of the gallery. Eve's warring sons, *Cain* and *Abel*, both 2019—rendered as petulant children—were situated away from their mother's sobering glare. These sculptures, the only definitive presence of maleness in the show, were also the saddest. One could detect fear and anger in the faces of these doomed little boys. Their prepubescent genitalia were also visible—markers of their horrible, bloody fates as the truly cursed, more tragic sex.

— Alex Jovanovich