

LINDA ETCOFF

From June 8 through July 9, 2007, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present an exhibition of large pastel drawings of amaryllis, sunflowers, French tulips and other plants by Linda Etcoff. Etcoff, whose early shows in New York and Boston in the mid-1970s established her reputation as a still life painter, has turned her attention exclusively to the art of drawing during the past decade.

For the works in this exhibition, Etcoff devotes her exceptional drawing ability to the challenge of making heroic drawings of potted plants and cut flowers. Defined by her articulate gesture and the searching action of her erasure marks, the lush media of charcoal, pastel and watercolor, and the subjects she loves in the flower market, Etcoff's new work is startling for its botanical truthfulness.

Her serious study of the botanical structure of horticultural specimens and the poignant poses of foliage and flower heads has led her to search for a new space in which to imagine a flower. Compositions that begin as portraits of individual flowering bromeliads (*aechmea del mar*), paddle plants (*kalanchoe thyrsiflora*), or fresh cut flowers expand on huge sheets of paper to encompass histories of her process of observation and reflection. Unhindered by the limits of a single sheet of paper, Etcoff pieces together additional sheets as she creates her compositions, which seem to grow as the drawing takes place.

Odilon Redon may have inspired Etcoff's placement of sunflower heads and leaves in *Sunflowers*, a sprawling composition on two sheets of paper that presents nine different blossoms, each tilting at different angles to reflect moments in its short life. The velvet ochre pastel of one sunflower leans on the dark blacks and verdant greens of another. In *French Tulips*, Etcoff focuses our attention on the haphazard arrangement of pink and yellow tulips in two glass vases. The once composed arrangement has passed its prime. A waxy petal is about to drop and the untrimmed stems are bowed under the weight of their flowers. Absorbed by their postures and grace, Etcoff evokes the life force and waning individuality of each blossom.

In *Paddle Plant* (*Kalanchoe thyrsiflora*), she captures many stages of life in the same plant. The terracotta pot anchors the composition with its unwavering stability and two young shoots with small verdant lime and emerald leaves cheerfully spill over the pot. The main stalk, expressing varying degrees of life and decay, stretches toward the sunlight. Green and aubergine leaves curl and wither as they climb up the stalk, the color draining as they ascend. As the pigment evaporates, a revived stem sprouts turgid leaves and delicate blossoms capped with a small yellow bloom. The charcoal smudging contributes to the temporal atmosphere of this and all of her drawings.

Etcoff's work is represented in the permanent collections of the Rose Art Museum, The De Cordova Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, among many other private and corporate collections.

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