

## ***Natasha Bowdoin: Maneater***

Artist's largest-ever cut paper and collage installation is on view now at MASS MoCA



Natasha Bowdoin, *Maneater*, 2018  
 Gouache and ink on cut paper  
 Image courtesy of the artist, photo by Dave Dahsiell

NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — In *Maneater*, Houston, Texas-based artist **Natasha Bowdoin** creates her largest-ever cut paper and collage installation, which investigates the intersections of the visual, the experiential, and the literary, treating language and nature as kindred phenomena. Referencing such sources as Golden Age children's book illustrations, 19th-century botanical drawings, floral textile patterns, lunar maps, and prints of underwater sea life, Bowdoin's fragile, lush installations shift and change as viewers explore their surfaces. *Maneater* is now on view in MASS MoCA's first-floor Hunter Hallway gallery with an

opening reception celebrating the work on **Saturday, March 24.**

Bowdoin's affinity for the wilderness began at a young age, as she wandered the woods and waters of Maine. This wasn't solely a physical act; she also used books to understand the landscape around her and to escape to unavailable landscapes. Primed with an empirical and a fictional experience of nature, filled with wonder and terror, Bowdoin's work flickers between unsentimental Darwinism and embroidered reverie. Her journeys into the dark woods hark to a time when fairy tales and scientific illustrations were equally plausible explanations of nature's mysteries: where Ernst Haeckel, Lewis Carroll, or the Brothers Grimm might all make suitable traveling companions.

In the Hunter Hallway gallery, Bowdoin's ambitious *Maneater* grows to consume the space like a fruiting vine or an invasive species. As in all her work, the installation draws from many references, ranging from pop culture ideas of nature and femininity to arcane literary traditions. The title of the installation conjures the Hall & Oates' *Maneater* (1982), a cautionary tale about a wild woman who will seduce you, then "chew you up." Equally applicable is Neko Case's *People Got a Lotta Nerve* (2009), which chides humans for underestimating nature — cuddly until the moment it, too, bites you back. Bowdoin is also interested



Natasha Bowdoin, *Maneater*, 2018  
 Gouache and ink on cut paper  
 Image courtesy of the artist, photo by Dave Dahsiell

in the 19th-century literary genre called “the language of flowers,” which used botanical arrangements as encrypted messages, a specific meaning assigned to each flower. These threads evoke a world in which language and nature are intertwined and potentially out to get us if we aren’t careful.

In the lush paper thicket coiling its way down the hallway, we see larger-than-life floral forms whose tranquility is undercut by carnivorous plants creeping and crawling across the gallery wall and floor. Subverting the traditional meanings ascribed to flowers — beauty, sentiment, delicacy, and femininity — Bowdoin gives the flowers back their thorns, reintroducing wildness and an unstoppable proliferation; her garden is overgrown, possibly toxic, but still seductive in its danger. She gives nature its teeth back, and the flower — beautiful but a little too abundant — becomes a feminist gesture of fight and resistance. In her interlaced references and layered forms, Bowdoin leads us into the dense, more savage precincts of the natural world, where our place in the food chain is less secure: a terrain of tooth and claw, thorn and root.

### About the Artist

Natasha Bowdoin (b. 1981, West Kennebunk, ME) earned an MFA from Tyler School of Art and a BA from Brandeis University in painting and classics. She has been awarded residencies at the Core Program in Houston, TX; the Roswell Artist-in-Residence program in New Mexico; and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska. Her work has been included in exhibitions across the United States and throughout Europe, including solo exhibitions at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond, VA; Talley Dunn Gallery, Dallas, TX; Savannah College of Art and Design Museum, GA; and Monya Rowe Gallery, New York, NY; and group exhibitions at Artpace, San Antonio, TX; the Portland Museum of Art, ME; the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC; the CODA Museum, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; and the **Cue** Art Foundation, New York, NY. Her work has been reviewed in publications including *Artforum*, *BOMB*, and *Wallpaper\** Magazine. Bowdoin lives and works in Houston, TX.

### Sponsorship

Major exhibition support is provided by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Barr Foundation, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

### Images

High-resolution images are available through this link: [bit.ly/NatashaBowdoin](http://bit.ly/NatashaBowdoin)

### About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world’s liveliest (and largest) centers for making, displaying, and enjoying today’s most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. MASS MoCA’s 250,000 sq. ft. of gallery space includes partnerships with Laurie Anderson, the Louise Bourgeois Trust, Jenny Holzer, Anselm Kiefer with the Hall Art Foundation, Sol LeWitt, and James Turrell.

Gallery admission is \$20 for adults, \$18 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. The Hall Art Foundation’s Anselm Kiefer exhibition is seasonal and will reopen on May 26 2018. For additional information: [413.662.2111 x1](tel:413.662.2111) or visit [massmoca.org](http://massmoca.org).

## **Hours**

MASS MoCA is open from 11am to 5pm, closed Tuesdays, through June 22. From June 23 through September 3, MASS MoCA's galleries are open seven days a week — from 10am to 6pm Sundays through Wednesdays and from 10am to 7pm Thursdays through Saturdays.