



“LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH,” 2011, **Jenn Shifflet**
ACRYLIC AND OIL ON WOOD, 24" DIAMETER
PHOTO: COURTESY CHANDRA CERRITO CONTEMPORARY

OAKLAND

Jenn Shifflet: “Verdant Refuge” at Chandra Cerrito Contemporary

Reflections on nature, and domesticated nature in particular, have been compelling subjects for artists such as Monet, who created his gardens at Giverny to provide subject matter for his paintings, up through Hockney, today returning to his English roots in works of the Yorkshire countryside. Artist Jenn Shifflet shares this fascination with the allure of flora, using a layered, mixed-media technique to create glowing visions of ethereal, abstracted landscapes in “Verdant Refuge.” Shifflet uses an unusual process, beginning with a layer of photographic information printed by Oakland’s Magnolia Editions, on wooden panel. The artist then builds up her surfaces with acrylic and oil paint, using layers of color and glaze, ending with seductive, glistening images that beckon us to bask in visual pleasure. *Afternoon Wishes* (2011) uses a ground of greens, ranging from light teal to khaki hues, blending into reddish golds, and translucent white circular forms disrupted by pale orange floral forms, suggesting daisies, hanging inverted from the top edge of the picture. Something magical hides behind the scenes, like fairies in the garden. An appealing round work, *Light Breaks Through* (2011) presents a watery, sap-green environment housing objects evoking shells, barnacles, flowers and undersea life. Circular forms, which break up the surface of the painting, could be effects of light and/or jellyfish.

While many artists find the landscape lends itself well to interpreting the change of season, exploring at times the warm tones of fall, chilly winter hues or sultry summer, Shifflet takes us down a verdant path suggesting an eternal spring-like lushness, where the ambiguity between sky, water and foliage leaves us unsure even of our point of reference. Whatever season might exist in this mental landscape is a temperate one. Avoiding specifics, Shifflet, a Buddhist, feels “the ineffable beauty of life is held within a profound fragility of impermanence.”

Shifflet also presents several mixed-media works on paper, quite appealing due to their directness. A neutral background color—tan, cream or gray—supports a washy form which she then delineates with circles, ripples, waves, drops, drips, petal or leaf-like forms. *Free Flow 8* (2011), in plum-like hues of alizarin and mauve, synthesizes flowers, water, clouds and foliage.

With such an abundance of jewel-like beauty, one might at times risk surfeit on too much of a good thing. Shifflet is at her best when she resists the impulse to dwell excessively on the ornate, instead, deftly suggesting an elusive, light-filled environment pulsating with a warm and fertile energy.

—BARBARA MORRIS