

# NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

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Paul Laster, "Sophia Narrett Sews the Seeds of Love, One Thread at a Time," Art & Object, December 4, 2020.



## Sophia Narrett Sews the Seeds of Love, One Thread at a Time



COURTESY KOHN GALLERY

Sophia Narrett, *Whisper Like a Magnet*, 2020.

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Creating colorful narratives about erotic encounters from needle and thread, Sophia Narrett makes fascinating embroidered artworks that are fueled by love and desire. Trained as a painter, the Brooklyn-based artist began working with yarn by chance while constructing a sculpture during her undergrad studies at Brown University. Further experimenting with thread to stitch some drawings, she brilliantly discovered a way to employ embroidery to simulate figurative paintings. By the time she received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2014, she was imaginatively making meaningful art with her new medium, which quickly caught the attention of critics, curators, and collectors.

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Sophia Narrett, *Infinity*, 2020.

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Not exactly your grandma's embroidery, although Narrett's initial interest in art actually did come from seeing her grandmother's handmade copies of Marc Chagall's romantic paintings, the artist fills her works with emotional experiences and wild fantasies. Starting with a preoccupation that she's personally felt or is pondering, Narrett develops a visual narrative by creating a digital collage with imagery culled from pop culture, movies, television shows, and social media, as well as her own staged photographs. Tapping into our collective consciousness through mass media and the Internet, she sensationally stitches people, props, and scenery together to construct contemporary tales on par with *The Garden of Earthly Delights'* celebrated creator, Hieronymus Bosch.

After a string of New York exhibitions and honors that elevated her profile and placed her in the context of some of the best young women artists working today, Narrett makes her Los Angeles solo show debut with *Soul Kiss*.

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Constructing the works in the exhibition over the course of a year—each meticulous piece can take from weeks to months to make—the artist is presenting nine new engaging embroideries, which are mounted on aluminum, in a variety of sizes and scenarios.

The largest work on view, *Whisper Like a Magnet*, is still intimate when compared to the scale of paintings by Cecily Brown and Lisa Yuskavage—two artists that Narrett admires who equally explore eroticism from a female point of view—yet it packs a powerful punch in the complexity of its story. Staged like a selection of colorful scenes from a modern melodrama, it follows the romantic relationship of a playful couple who go from shooting paintballs and appreciating pandas to making love in the clouds and marrying. Chock full of symbolic details, it captures a hippie-like orgy in the sophisticated style of television's *Mad Men* and *Sex in the City*.



Sophia Narrett, *Before First Sight*, 2020.

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*Before First Sight* also has that fresh from the screen look—albeit the monitor of a video game—with androgynous female figures tumbling through a mountainous landscape to rescue a damsel in distress and the sun bursting through the hills like an explosive shot from a gamer's gun. The woman they seek to rescue may just need saving from her isolation, as the work was made during the coronavirus crisis. As she lingers in her loneliness, a nearby couple caress and other women gather beneath the clouds in joyful packs.



Sophia Narrett, *Someday*, 2020.

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Some of the smaller pictures seem like stage scenarios and outtakes from a film. *Sweethearts* shows a nude woman wildly straddling a mailbox as she embraces her man; *Infinity* reveals an overtly passionate nude femme fatale giving a guy a lap dance on a park bench; and *Someday* portrays two women in a rapturous embrace on a cornucopia-shaped arrangement of clouds, waves, rainbows, and planets capped by a four-leaf clover for good luck. Creating her own personal mythology, Narrett provides viewers endless entertainment while inventively contributing to an age-old medium and the ever-changing nature of contemporary art.



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Brie Ruais, *Closing in on Opening Up, Nevada Site 6, 127lbs, 2020.*

Two additional Los Angeles shows add new meaning to traditional craft mediums: Brooklyn-based sculptor Brie Ruais at Night Gallery and Japanese floral artist Megumi Shinozaki at Nonaka-Hill. Ruais constructs vigorous ceramic abstractions in nature from the weight of her body in clay, while Shinozaki fabricates delicate floral displays with paper, wire, and rocks.

Ruais's exhibition, *Spiraling Open and Closed Like an Aperture*, presents a powerful group of clay sculptural works, which the artist created in Nevada's Great Basin Desert, along with a selection of dynamic drone photographs of the works in situ and a stone wall made from rocks that she collected on her road trip from Northeastern Nevada to L.A. Using her body as her only tool, the artist pushed the equivalence of her body weight in clay into riveting abstract shapes on the ground and then removed the pieces to be glazed, fired, and reformulated on the gallery's walls.

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Brie Ruais, *Opposing Tides, Shaping Forces*, 2020.

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*Closing in on Opening Up, Nevada Site 6*, 127lbs, depicts an eternal sunshine divided like a clock; *Turning Over*, 128lbs of clay and another of rocks and rubble portrays two complementary spirals composed from clay and rocks; and *Opposing Tides, Shaping Forces* presents a mural-size structure, which mimics the vastness of the desert's horizon line, that was made in the artist's studio by two people pressing their weight in clay towards one another. The photographs and stone wall add an arid ambiance to the white box, while providing new ways for the artist to express her earthy yet spiritual vision.

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COURTESY NONAKA-HILL

Megumi Shinozaki, *Cyclamen*, 2020.

Shinozaki also practices a back-to-the-earth aesthetic in the exhibition *Paper Eden*, but her work is all about simulating the sublime. Trained in the artistry of flower arrangement, she creates classic *ikebana* floral arrangements with cut-paper and wire and sets them in rough, natural stones.

Titled for the types of flowers the sculptures depict, *Cyclamen* highlights its shapely green leaves over its dainty white petals, while the orange-colored *Cymbidium* is all flowers and no leaves. Creating a sense of *wabi-sabi* with found and fabricated means, Shinozaki captures the beauty of nature for all time.