

WALLFLOWERS

AVANTIKA BAWA, NAMWON CHOI, ZEREK KEMPF, SHANNA ZENTNER
CURATED BY CRAIG DRENNEN

March 16 – April 27, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, March 16, 2024, 6pm – 8pm

Press Release

Greene House Gallery is honored to present *WALLFLOWERS*, a group exhibition curated by Craig Drennen featuring work by **Avantika Bawa, Namwon Choi, Zerek Kempf, and Shanna Zentner**. *WALLFLOWERS* opens Saturday, March 16, 2024 and remains on view through April 27.

WALLFLOWERS is an exhibition of wall-based artworks by four artists with very divergent practices. The idea of working directly onto walls began with Paleolithic cave painting and continues to present times, with each historic era instrumentalizing it in new ways. Whether it was bison at Lascaux or the pastoral scenes in the villas of Pompeii, wall painting was a way to bring the outside world into the living space. Renaissance frescoes gave churchgoers a glimpse into the heavens for the purpose of religious narration, while both the Mexican muralists and WPA artists of the early 20th century used public walls to reinforce social morality. In fall 1968, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City hosted an exhibition titled *The Great Age of Fresco: Giotto to Pontormo*, where Italian frescoes were removed from Italian walls and displayed as portable surfaces. That same year, either by causation or coincidence, Sol Lewitt produced the first of his legendary wall drawings, providing a radically elegant role model for impermanence and immateriality. The 1970's brought a generation of energetically truant graffiti artists who changed what individual creativity could look like in public spaces. Wall pieces moved their anti-authoritarian ethos back indoors during the 1990's with examples like Mike Kelley's large-scale wall mural based on off-color interoffice faxes, *Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Room (With Copy Room) of an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry*, which was included in the *Helter Skelter* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 1990. In 2009, the Scottish artist Richard Wright won the Turner Prize for his wall paintings, and it seemed that wall-based practices were now thoroughly embedded in the canon.

The artists in *WALLFLOWERS* utilize the walls of Greene House Gallery in distinctive, idiosyncratic ways. Avantika Bawa has amassed 25 years of wall-based projects and exhibitions where she uses drawing, painting, and fabricated objects to make architectural surfaces as intimate as drawing. Namwon Choi paints the walls of exhibition spaces as a method of providing chromatic context for her portable paintings and painted spheres. Zerek Kempf approaches the walls of exhibition spaces with a sculptor's mindset, often using altered found objects to interrupt or punctuate architectural forms. Shanna Zentner uses wall mural techniques to expand the formal language of her paintings to amplify psychological effects. For both Zentner and Choi, the wall provides an additional opportunity to amplify the painterly impact. For Choi and Kempf, the wall also provides a surface where gravity and bodily orientation can be challenged, as familiar items appear in new ways. For Kempf and Bawa the wall is a substrate to be acted upon, like any other artistic surface. For Bawa and Zentner, the wall also provides a type of emotional room tone where every square inch of the activated surface is cared for.

Avantika Bawa lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Originally from New Delhi, India, she received an MFA in Painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA in the same from the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, India. She has participated in numerous residencies that include Skowhegan, ME; Ucross Foundation, WY; MacDowell, NH; Kochi Biennial Foundation, India, and Nes Artist Residency, Iceland. Noteworthy solo exhibits include shows at The Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Schneider Museum, Ashland, OR; Suyama Space, Seattle, WA; The Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA; Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center, Atlanta, GA; Nature Morte and Gallery Maskara in India; and Disjecta, Portland, OR. Large scale site-specific installations include, A Pink Scaffold in the Rann, Kutch, India (2019-20), and A Yellow Scaffold on the Ranch, part of Art Beyond, Ashland OR (2021). She is a Professor of Fine Arts at Washington State University, Vancouver, WA.

Namwon Choi is an artist splitting her time between Augusta, GA and Atlanta, GA. Choi earned her BFA and MFA in Traditional Korean Painting from Hongik University in Seoul, Korea in 2002, and her MFA in Drawing and Painting at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA in 2014. In 2020 she was included in the Wiregrass Museum Biennial in Dothan, Alabama and in 2021 her solo exhibition at THE END Project Space in Atlanta, GA was reviewed by the Atlanta Journal Constitution. In 2022 she had solo exhibitions at the Moss Art Center at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, VA and at Laney Contemporary in Savannah, GA. In 2023 Choi was one of five artists included in New Worlds: Georgia Women to Watch, co-curated by Melissa Messina and Sierra King, at Atlanta Contemporary, organized by the Georgia Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Choi's work has been exhibited in the Korean Cultural Centers in New York City, Los Angeles, and in Washington D.C., where her work was reviewed by the Washington Post. In August 2024, Choi will have her first solo museum exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Georgia.

Zerek Kempf received his MFA from the University of California, San Diego in 2006 and his BFA from The Ohio State University in 2003. He has been selected to attend residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Vermont Studio Center, The Atlantic Center for the Arts, Fountainhead, and the New York Art Residency & Studio Foundation. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; Waag Society, Amsterdam; CA2M Museum, Madrid.

Shanna Zentner is a painter whose work includes mural, installation, printmaking, and ceramics. Originally from New York City, she is currently based in Chicago, holding a BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and an MFA from The University of Chicago where she was awarded an Art, Science, and Culture Fellowship. Shanna has exhibited throughout the US and in Germany and has work in the collection of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. She was an artist in residence at Ox-Bow School of Art in 2017, The Center Program at Hyde Park Art Center in 2019, and at Pilotenkeuche in Leipzig, Germany in 2022. She has lectured at The University of Chicago and Purdue University Northwest.

Craig Drennen is a painter based in Atlanta and a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow. He shows at Freight+Volume Gallery in New York City and Laney Contemporary in Savannah, GA. His work has been reviewed in Art in America, Artforum, and The New York Times. His recent curatorial projects include Paula Crown: #solotogether at Rockefeller Center in New York City. He served as Dean at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, teaches at Georgia State University, and manages THE END Project Space in Atlanta.

Checklist (clockwise from left)



Namwon Choi

New Worlds (Untitled-1), 2023

Acrylic and gouache on panels

14 x 14 in (35.6 x 35.6 cm) and 4 in (10.2 cm) diameter



Zerek Kempf

The Dukes, 2018

Cast aluminum

14 x 4 x 3 in. (35.6 x 10.2 x 7.6 cm)

Edition 1 of 2



Avantika Bawa

A Pink Dot, 2024

Pigment and medium on wall

55 in (139.7 cm) diameter



Namwon Choi

Blue Sphere 1, 2024

Acrylic and gouache on wood

5 in (12.7 cm) diameter



Namwon Choi
Blue Sphere 2, 2024
Acrylic and gouache on wood
5 in (12.7 cm) diameter



Zerek Kempf
A sound you can live with, 2021
1-8 smoke detectors
Dimensions variable



Shanna Zenter
Mandorla, 2024
Water-based vinyl paint
96 x 96 in (243.8 x 243.8 cm)



Shanna Zenter
Initiation, 2024
Oil and acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 in (30.5 x 30.5 cm)



Shanna Zenter
To Bend, 2022
Oil and acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 in (30.5 x 30.5 cm)