
The Pink Pepper Tree

Karin Gulbran

April 26–June 14, 2025

Parker Gallery is proud to present its first solo exhibition of the Los Angeles-based artist Karin Gulbran, marking the first exhibition of her work in Los Angeles in ten years. Gulbran's ceramic sculptures comprise a variety of repeated forms, including: animal pots, fishbowls, pelican vases, singing birds, budding branch vessels and obscure mirrors. In turn, these forms feature often repeated decorative motifs, such as rain, stars, branches, flowers and coffee bean leaves. This presentation of new work highlights a full range of forms and motifs in the artist's sculptural practice, alongside her first publicly exhibited painting in twenty-five years.

Mountain Scene: Stars and Rain, Moon and Trees, Boar and Hare (2025) incorporates many recurring themes into a singular large-scale pot, formed with a golden brown clay body, revealed in the negative silhouette delineating the images. While *Pink Cloud* (2024), built with a dark, mineral-rich clay, is decorated with a large cat wrapped around the entire vessel, scampering away from the rain.

During renovations of the new Melrose Avenue gallery, Gulbran was particularly taken with the Brazilian pink pepper tree sweeping low to the ground and then rising up in to two magnificent trunks (which are now protruding through the gallery deck). A distinctive feature of the site, the tree became a catalyst for conceptualizing the artist's exhibition.

Another important touchstone was a 1963 painting by the California artist Jess, entitled *Moonset at Sunrise*. A photo that she took of the original painting has long been tacked to the wall of her studio. The painting

features rosy blossoms blooming from a tree outside a window, which Gulbran began to conflate with the pink pepper tree at the gallery. The morning after her encounter with the tree, she stepped outside and discovered that a crescent moon was setting just as the sun was coming up, enacting the phenomena depicted in the painting. This experience inspired Gulbran to attempt something she has never done before, to reproduce a work by another artist, yielding a similar yet distinctly different result (*Moonset at Sunrise after Jess*, 2025) at twice the original scale, returning to her roots as a painter. Through the process of making this painting her own, the artist began to imagine the figure in *Moonset* to be a portrait of herself, looking from the symbolic interior onto a landscape of her making.

Gulbran's ceramic vessels and sculptures portray wilderness and the bestiary that inhabit it, in dreamlike narratives that unfold sequentially. *Moonset at Sunrise after Jess* hangs in the gallery as a custodian overseeing the exhibition, connecting the real and imagined interior to the real and imagined outdoors.

While Gulbran's ceramics are often described as painterly, she notes that although the result is expressive and gestural, the glazing process is slow and tedious. Rediscovering her painting practice inspired the artist to experiment with a looser hand in several of the largest works in the show. The result introduces a motif of mountains and a wider vista to her collection of imagery.

Karin Gulbran (b.1967, Seattle, WA) lives and works in Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions include: *Hunting at Dusk*, Piece Unique, MASSIMODECARLO, Paris, France (2024); *Obscure Mirrors & Totemic Lamps*, Pierre Marie Giraud, Bruxelles (2022); *Somnambulist*, MASSIMODECARLO, London, United Kingdom (2021); *Weird Sisters*, MASSIMODECARLO, Milan, Italy (2018); *The Woods*, Pierre Marie Giraud, Brussels (2016) and *Karin Gulbran*, White Columns, New York (2014). Recent group exhibitions include: *Bowls, Boxes, Plates & Vessels*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2024); *Rainforest Cafe*, curated by Higinio Martinez, Guerrero Gallery, Los Angeles (2024); *Beasties*, Rebecca Camacho Presents, San Francisco (2024); *South Willard*, Gordon Robichaux, New York (2024); *Wishing Well*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); and *These lacustrine homes*, curated by Mai-Thu Perret, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2021).