

Emilie Clark *Sweet Corruptions*

September 6 – October 20, 2012

Reception: Thursday, September 6, 6 – 8pm

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 – 6pm



Morgan Lehman Gallery is pleased to present the fourth solo show of artist Emilie Clark titled “Sweet Corruptions.”

Since 2003 Clark has inserted herself into the works and lives of the Victorian women scientists and naturalists Mary Ward, Mary Treat, Martha Maxwell, and Ellen Henrietta Richards. Clark’s practice involves painting, drawing, archival research and writing, installation and sculpture. Treating her studio like a laboratory, Clark literally restages much of the research these women undertook.

This exhibition departs from the work of Ellen H. Richards—a sanitary chemist who studied air, water, and food. Richards was the first female student and then professor at MIT, and brought the word ecology into the English language. Richards’s research—like that of the other scientists Clark has studied—points to transformations of organic material that suggest both fluid categories and vast networks of interconnectivity. Following Richards’s air, water and food taxonomy, Clark interweaves them through the provocation offered by Walt Whitman in his poem “This Compost”: “Such sweet things are made of such corruptions.” Elaborating on Richards, Clark sees compost not just as a mundane mode of regeneration, but also as an engine of cosmology. Both Richards’ practice and Clark’s involve careful testing, sustained empirical inquiry, structured interaction with daily life, and ultimately, world building.

The watercolors and paintings in the exhibition are based, in part, on Clark’s process, over the last year, of preserving her family’s food waste—a month for every season. The paintings emerge not as fanciful still lifes of garbage heap composting, but rather as intricate compositions that blend full abstraction with carefully rendered studies of the fauna and flora in her daily detritus. Out of this process Clark created an audio and text piece, “The Art of Right Living,” based on a Richards’ book of the same title. Clark meticulously documents the surprising lives of her preserved food scraps, describes in detail such processes as her desiccating and pickling of carcasses, and also elaborates on her shifting understanding of her ongoing practice. “Sweet Corruptions” as a whole transforms Richards’s early thinking about ecology into paintings, watercolors, texts, and installations in which the detritus of everyday life becomes a complex and often beautiful cosmology.

Emilie Clark was born in San Francisco in 1969. She received her BFA from Cornell University in 1991, and moved to New York City from the Bay Area in 1998. She received her MFA from Bard College in 2001. Clark has exhibited widely in the United States and Europe, including solo shows at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, a survey show at the MUSARC in Ferrara, Italy (2000), and a three-person show at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin, Ireland (2003). She has been included in several group exhibitions in New York, including *Rare Specimen* at The Arsenal, *Pondering the Marvelous* at Wave Hill, and *Poetry Plastique* at Marianne Boesky gallery, and has had two previous solo shows at Morgan Lehman, *The Weeklies* in 2007 and *Maxwell’s Lair* in 2009. In addition to her solo projects, Clark has published a number of collaborative works with author Lyn Hejinian, and most recently a folio project from the Hui Press, *Over Cook*, with poet (and husband) Lytle Shaw. Her medical drawings have appeared on numerous medical journal and textbook covers, including the *Journal of Experimental Medicine* and the *History of Endocrine Surgery*. Clark was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio residency in 2001 as well as a Pollock Krasner Foundation grant in 2002-2003.

For more information, please visit morganlehmgallery.com, or contact the gallery at 212.268.6699.