

Karen Lederer
One Grain of Sand



September 8 – October 8, 2022

Morgan Lehman is pleased to present “One Grain of Sand,” an exhibition of new paintings by Karen Lederer. This marks the artist’s first solo exhibition with the gallery.

The show’s title comes from a Pete Seeger song of the same name, which the artist sings to her young child at night:

*One grain of sand
One drop of water in the sea
One grain of sand
One little you, one little me*

Seeger’s lyrics ask us to consider the immensity of the universe and an individual’s small place within it. The imagery is stark and humbling, yet beautiful in the way it describes a powerful bond between parent and child as they confront a majestic, formidable world together.

The paintings in Lederer’s exhibition similarly aim to focus on the intimate, inviting the viewer into the private space of the home. A cast of characters occupy these domestic scenes: a new mother, fish in their bowl, quirky face jugs, animated houseplants and children’s toys. In the works on view, the landscape is a recurring theme, viewed through the pictorial device of the window, houseplants or patterns on wallpaper and clothing. We also see evidence of Lederer’s wide-ranging artistic influences: the artist catches her reflection in the mirror while her form is echoed in a reproduction of Mary Cassatt’s artwork on the wall and a book on the Pattern and Decoration movement finds kinship in the surrounding décor. The spaces depicted feel safe and lush, but also reveal the wrinkles of their constructed reality. Bees attempt to pollinate floral wallpaper, water leaks from a crack in a vase, and decorative wallpaper peels away, revealing solid wood boards. These disruptions highlight the tenuousness of a life lived inside.

The paintings make use of a colorfully graphic visual style that is crisp while retaining a handmade softness. Relying on her expertise as a printmaker, Lederer deploys a range of monoprinting and masking techniques and unites them with more traditional brush applications. Each piece appears almost collaged, but is actually a virtuosic painting feat. The works present shallow-field spaces that highlight the imagistic tension between two-point perspective and the flatness of the artist’s various decorative motifs. These spatial conundrums are a pleasure to behold, and point us back to questions about how we shape our small interior worlds, and how those worlds relate to the larger beyond.

Karen Lederer received her BFA in Printmaking and Drawing from Washington University in St. Louis in 2008 and an MFA in Printmaking from Rhode Island School of Design in 2012. She has been an artist in residence at Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, Lower East Side Printshop, and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program. Lederer has presented her work in solo exhibitions at Cheymore Gallery, One River School, Guilford College Art Gallery, Tennis Elbow at The Journal Gallery, Grant Wahlquist Gallery, and Field Projects. She has participated in many group exhibitions, most recently at Morgan Lehman Gallery, Deanna Evans Projects, Dinner Gallery, Cristea Roberts Gallery, and Hashimoto Contemporary.

Karen Lederer, *Behind the Flowerbed*, 2022, Oil and acrylic on panel, 16h x 20w in (40.64h x 50.80w cm)