

# S m a c k M e l l o n

## Paula Wilson

*Spread Wild: Pleasures of the Yucca*

September 29–November 4, 2018

All works courtesy of the artist

*Spread Wild: Pleasures of the Yucca*, 2018

Video, 2:04 minutes

Director of Photography: Simeon Mark Cofie  
and Deborah Voorhees

Editor: Deborah Voorhees

Score: Anna Luisa Petrisko

Actors: Mike Lagg, Sula Gordon,  
Simeon Mark Cofie, Corbin LaMont,  
Sparkle Daddy, Jean Templeton Morris, Paula Wilson

Courtesy of the artist



Filmed in Carrizozo, New Mexico, where Wilson lives, this video features two segments that evoke the spirit of mutualism and the wish of giving oneself over to the wild. The first scene shows the artist and friends harvesting yucca blossoms in the desert landscape and then sharing the edible flower at a picnic. It signifies the community coming together in appreciation of nature's bounty. In the second scene, the artist and her partner perform a seductive dance, which embodies the mating ritual of the moth and the pollination of the yucca plant.

*Yucca Column*, 2018

Woodblock print on muslin

Courtesy of the artist



# S m a c k M e l l o n

*Flower*, 2018

monotype, woodblock print, acrylic, and oil on muslin and cotton fabric

*Pod*, 2018

monotype, woodblock print, acrylic, and oil on muslin and cotton fabric

*Seed*, 2018

Screenprint, monotype, woodblock print, acrylic, and oil on muslin

Elements made in a public program with the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts and The Union for Contemporary Art, UNO Weber Fine Arts, and Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska.



These three larger-than-life figures represent naturalists and the embodiment of the synchronized life cycles of the yucca plant and moth. This particular insect is the yucca's only pollinator. The two have evolved together with an interdependent and advantageous form of reproduction. The artist depicts three stages of this phenomenon. In *Flower*, the male and female moths mate inside the yucca blossom. The female deposits its eggs inside the plant tissue of the stamen. Imagery on the figure's garment shows the nighttime environs and activities of these nocturnal insects. During the *Pod* stage, the moth larva is housed in the protection of the seed pod, eating the yucca granules for sustenance. The hooded figure represents the vessel or womb that incubates the developing insect. In *Seed*, the figure is older and clothed in a layered robe. During this stage, the yucca pod breaks open and releases its seeds to spread new life. Meanwhile, the larva burrows out of the plant, falls to the ground, and builds a cocoon inside the earth, here depicted as a pot on the ground. The wingless insect awaits the beginning of the next summer when the yucca blooms again and the moth emerges in adult form, taking flight to begin its romantic affair.



# S m a c k M e l l o n

## *Moth Mobile, 2018*

Made in collaboration with Mike Lagg

Wood (cherry, ash, black walnut, redwood), brass, nylon,  
woodblock print on muslin

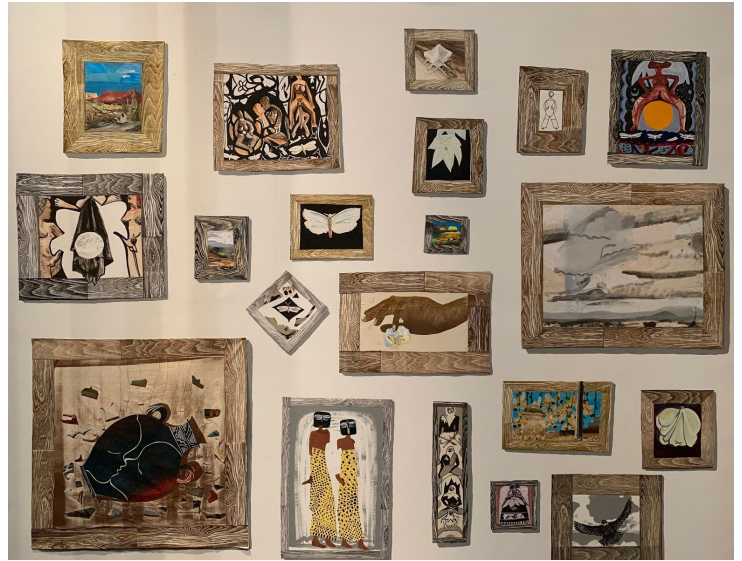
## *Yucca Lights, 2018*

Made in collaboration with Mike Lagg

Wood (ash, cherry), LED strip  
Courtesy of the artist

## *Yucca (yellow), 2018*

woodblock print on spandex  
Courtesy of the artist



## *The Naturalist's Collection, 2018*

Selection of works, including monotype, woodblock print, acrylic, and oil on paper and muslin

Courtesy of the artist

As a self-taught naturalist, the act of painting for Wilson is a process toward understanding the subjects that she investigates. Given the lack of representation of people of color in the environmental field, Wilson could not see her herself as a naturalist at first. She has nurtured this interest through her own research into flora and fauna, closely observing the workings of nature through artmaking. The collection of sketches and collages on this wall highlights the experience of the wild, which has intrigued her since moving to New Mexico ten years ago.