

GARDEN

S. Billie Mandle

Blue Ground

April 29 - June 17, 2020

Garden is pleased to present *Blue Ground*, an online exhibition by Los Angeles and Amherst, Massachusetts-based artist S. Billie Mandle. In this body of work, Mandle turned her camera toward the gardens of cooperative homes for people with intellectual and physical disabilities. These contemplative large-format photographs of flowers, weeds, and garden walls have been overlaid with distinct shades of blue sourced from the hues used in medical supplies. Here, Mandle meditates on the politics and nature of care, community, and health through the cultural lens of the color blue.

A portion of the proceeds of the exhibition will be donated to COVID-19 Mutual Aid Network Los Angeles.

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Contemporary artists are not supposed to take pictures of flowers—or at least not until they get really old.

Once I tried to photograph communities where people with a range of mental and physical abilities lived together. I failed.

All of the homes in these communities had a garden—and the communities in France had especially beautiful, strange gardens with a mix of wild flowers and weeds. The gardens looked like what the homes felt like.

The communities were a combination of vulnerability and strength. Many of the members could not feed or bathe themselves. Life in these communities was very different from normal society—harder but also more substantial, resilient.

I wanted to convey the powerful delicacy of the gardens—for them to feel strange and strong yet fragile and exposed.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura's nickname was "Blue Roses." Blue is the color of most things medical, gloves, gowns, and handicapped parking spaces. It is the color of the Virgin Mary, the sky, cold hands, and depression. Blue is infrequent in nature—less than 10 percent of flowers in nature are technically blue. Blue is the hardest color for the human eye to perceive.

— S. Billie Mandle

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S. Billie Mandle (b. New Haven, 1978) is an artist based in Los Angeles, CA, and Amherst, MA. She approaches photography as a tool for observation and obstruction, looking at the intersection of power, history and place. Mandle's work is internationally exhibited and published, including features in *Aperture*, *Cabinet*, *Image and Wired*. She earned a BA in biology and English from Williams College and an MFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. She is an assistant professor of photography at Hampshire College in Amherst. Her monograph, *Reconciliation*, will be published in spring 2020 by Kehrer Verlag.