

Michelle Stuart

Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects and Salomon Contemporary

Michelle Stuart's two ravishing shows featured old and new projects, spanning

a half century of art making. Stuart, who has lived and worked in New York since the late '50s, is best known for her work with ephemeral, organic materials, often presented in series, and crossing feminist-leaning content with Minimalist formulations.

Many of the works in the exhibitions are

catalogues of sorts—pages that seem taken from a nature album, laid out as a generous-size grid and hung on a wall,

with each segment framing a particular seed, pod, or leaf. At Salomon, the striking work *Extinct* (1995-97) features the word "extinct" stamped across each page, while in the delicate *Aquilegia* (1995-97), rice paper sheets are each impressed with a single elegant columbine seed nestled in a spot of ink.

There were also collections of botanicals and stones placed in tiny beeswax containers, recalling ritual offerings or a fairy buffet spread. Some were textured, booklike objects. Others, meanwhile, were equally tactile graphite works on handmade paper, such as the dramatic 12-foot-long scroll covered in markings that fell from ceiling to floor at Leslie Tonkonow, a highlight of the exhibitions.

Another group of works there consisted of grids of altered ink-jet photographs, as in the broadly encompassing *Trajectory of Evolutionary Correspondences* (2010), with its Darwinian images of flora and fauna, and in the evocative *Ring of Fire* (2010), which brings to mind Marguerite Duras's autobiographical novel *The Lover* as well as the artist's family roots in the South Pacific. Stuart's vision is anthropological, sociological, environmental, and cinematic—poetry with the look of science, hovering somewhere between detritus, desire, and memory.

—Lilly Wei

