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Sam Van Aken: New Edens

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Sam Van Aken: New Edens

Description

Hybridized fruit trees, grafted orchids on shiny, reflective aluminum pedestals, fluorescent lights placed vertically on stands, and sheets of silver Mylar create a lush and somewhat disorienting space in contemporary artist Sam Van Aken's most recent body of work *New Edens*. Van Aken makes Gettysburg College's Schmucker Art Gallery into a kind of fantastical and futuristic winter garden. Without daylight and despite the cool fall weather of the Northeast, the dozen trees in the gallery are leafy and green, some even bearing fruit. Peach, plum, cherry, nectarine and apricot branches emerge from a single trunk and grow productively alongside their sister fruits. These surprising new plants, carefully designed and created by the artist, are titled *Trees of 40 Fruits*, and as time passes the artist will continue to graft more branches of various kinds of fruits onto each "parent" rootstock until he has reached forty. The saplings on display are relatively small, but eventually these trees will reach an approximate height of twenty feet. Van Aken created a nursery as part of his studio in Syracuse, New York. As an artist-cum-horticulturalist, he, like a nurturing parent, cares for his grafted fruit trees with a steadfast devotion. In his studio Van Aken carefully concocts the best fertilizers, waters carefully and diligently, removes hoards of Japanese beetles from the leaves one-by-one, and provides adequate warmth and protection for the young trees (with huge mounds of mulch and careful wrappings) during harsh New York winters. [excerpt]

Keywords

horticulture, Sam Van Aken, Genesis, new eden

Disciplines

Art and Design | Horticulture | Plant Sciences

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Comments

Sam Van Aken: New Edens was on exhibition at the Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College, October 21 - December 10, 2011.



SAM VAN AKEN: NEW EDENS

SAM VAN AKEN: NEW EDENS



*New Edens, (Grafted Orchids and
Trees of 40 Fruits)*
installation at The 2011 Armory Show,
New York City, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

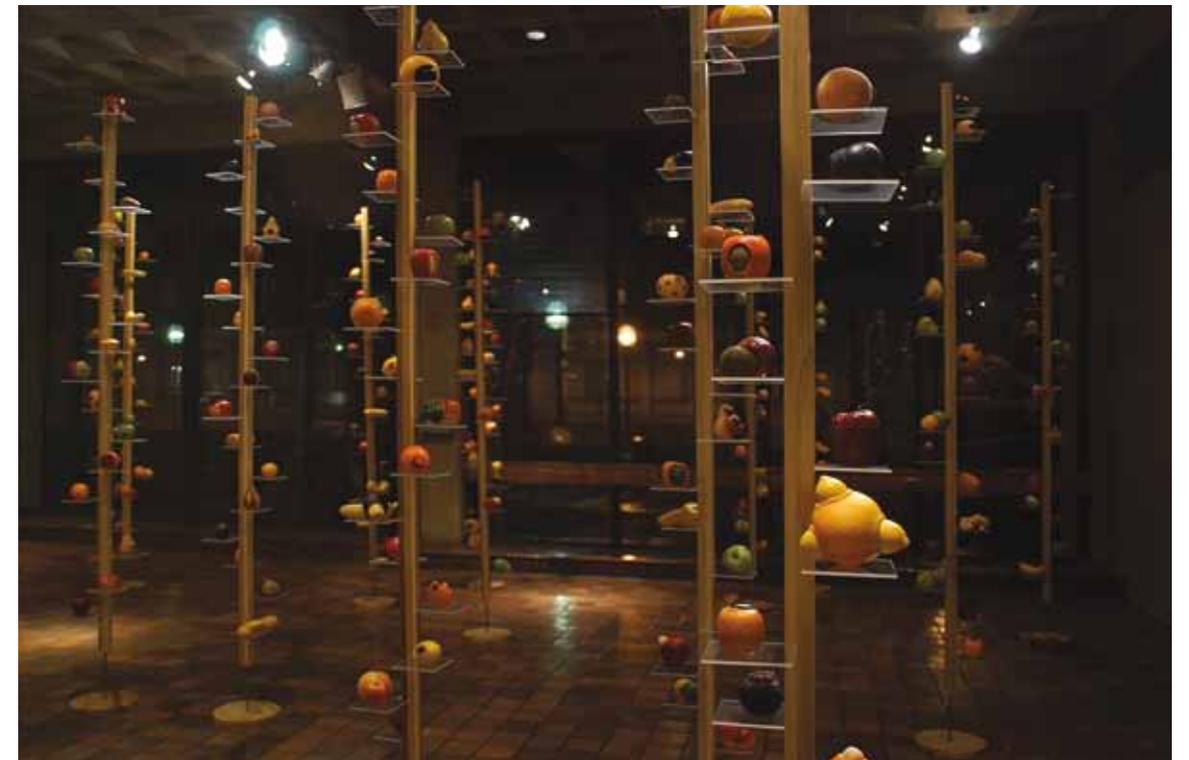
Hybridized fruit trees, grafted orchids on shiny, reflective aluminum pedestals, fluorescent lights placed vertically on stands, and sheets of silver Mylar create a lush and somewhat disorienting space in contemporary artist Sam Van Aken's most recent body of work *New Edens*. Van Aken makes Gettysburg College's Schmucker Art Gallery into a kind of fantastical and futuristic winter garden. Without daylight and despite the cool fall weather of the Northeast, the dozen trees in the gallery are leafy and green, some even bearing fruit. Peach, plum, cherry, nectarine and apricot branches emerge from a single trunk and grow productively alongside their sister fruits. These surprising new plants, carefully designed and created by the artist, are titled *Trees of 40 Fruits*, and as time passes the artist will continue to graft more branches of various kinds of fruits onto each "parent" rootstock until he has reached forty. The saplings on display are relatively small, but eventually these trees will reach an approximate height of twenty feet. Van Aken created a nursery as part of his studio in Syracuse, New York. As an artist-cum-horticulturalist, he, like a nurturing parent, cares for his grafted fruit trees with a steadfast devotion. In his studio Van Aken carefully concocts the best fertilizers, waters carefully and diligently, removes hoards of Japanese beetles from the leaves one-by-one, and provides adequate warmth and protection for the young trees (with huge mounds of mulch and careful wrappings) during harsh New York winters.

In addition to having the knowledge of a horticulturalist and the patience of a farmer, Van Aken, as an artist, challenges notions of materiality, process, and allegory in his sculptures, installations, and prints.

The act of grafting trees can be seen as a kind of additive sculptural process, but the manipulation of this unconventional artistic medium is met with challenges not usually encountered in the studio: potentially disastrous extremes of weather, voracious insects, and the general fastidiousness of this living material. “Where a bronze sculpture would provide an easier ally,” Van Aken admits, “working with living material can be temperamental. But it is this living quality that I feel gives the tree its greatest impact and potential.” Van Aken blurs the distinction between the disciplines of art and horticulture through his botanical experiments, his uncanny conception of new forms of life, and more broadly, his questioning of the limits of creation. While religion—primarily the biblical intimation of Van Aken’s titles *New Edens* and *Trees of 40 Fruits*—is a crucial touchstone in this work, other examinations of conception, cross-breeding, historicity, and temporality permeate the exhibition. Additionally, Van Aken’s prints and collages of seed packets commonly sold in nurseries and “big box” stores echo this theme of hybridization and horticulture. The artist has been investigating these ideas in prior bodies of work, *Hybrids* (2004), juxtapositions of fruits made from plastic, and *Eden* (2008), cross-bred vegetables exhibited in large mirrored planters. Ultimately, Van Aken’s work is a hybrid itself, a portmanteau comprised of natural phenomena and man-made feats, art and science, allegory and agriculture.

The Art of Horticulture

Van Aken’s exhibition of trees and plants comes at a time of increasing popular interest in and anxiety about America’s industrialized food systems, genetic engineering, and genetic modification of foods. This concern for environmental sustainability is also coupled with a sense of nostalgia for smaller family farms in the face of increasingly larger factory food production. Van Aken’s horticultural experiments may seem monstrous in the creation of a kind of Frankenstein fruit tree, but his methods of grafting occur by hand with care and should not be confused with the suspect biotechnological engineering that currently is a fraught socio-political issue, especially among proponents for non-genetically engineered foods. Breeders of hybrid fruits do not typically encounter the criticism targeted at the “big makers of genetically modified plants,” as reported recently in *The Wall Street Journal*, “in part because their old-fashioned methods take place in the field, not in a lab, mimicking how plants naturally evolve.”¹ As consumers, we’re already familiar with the idea of hybridized fruits (Plumcots, Pluots or Apriums, combinations of apricot-plums, for example), which are derived from the pollination of a “mother” tree, the bringing of a male component to the female parent. Van Aken uses a different method to maintain the integrity of each fruit on his hybrid trees and explains that his trees are developed through the process of chip grafting. The sexual implication



Eden, 2008
5'x5' wood planters with
acrylic mirror, grow lights,
extension cords, soil, plants,
stereo, speakers
dimensions variable

Hybrids, 2004
wood, acrylic sheet, vinyl,
polyurethane, resin, steel,
each stand 12"x12"x8',
installation dimensions variable



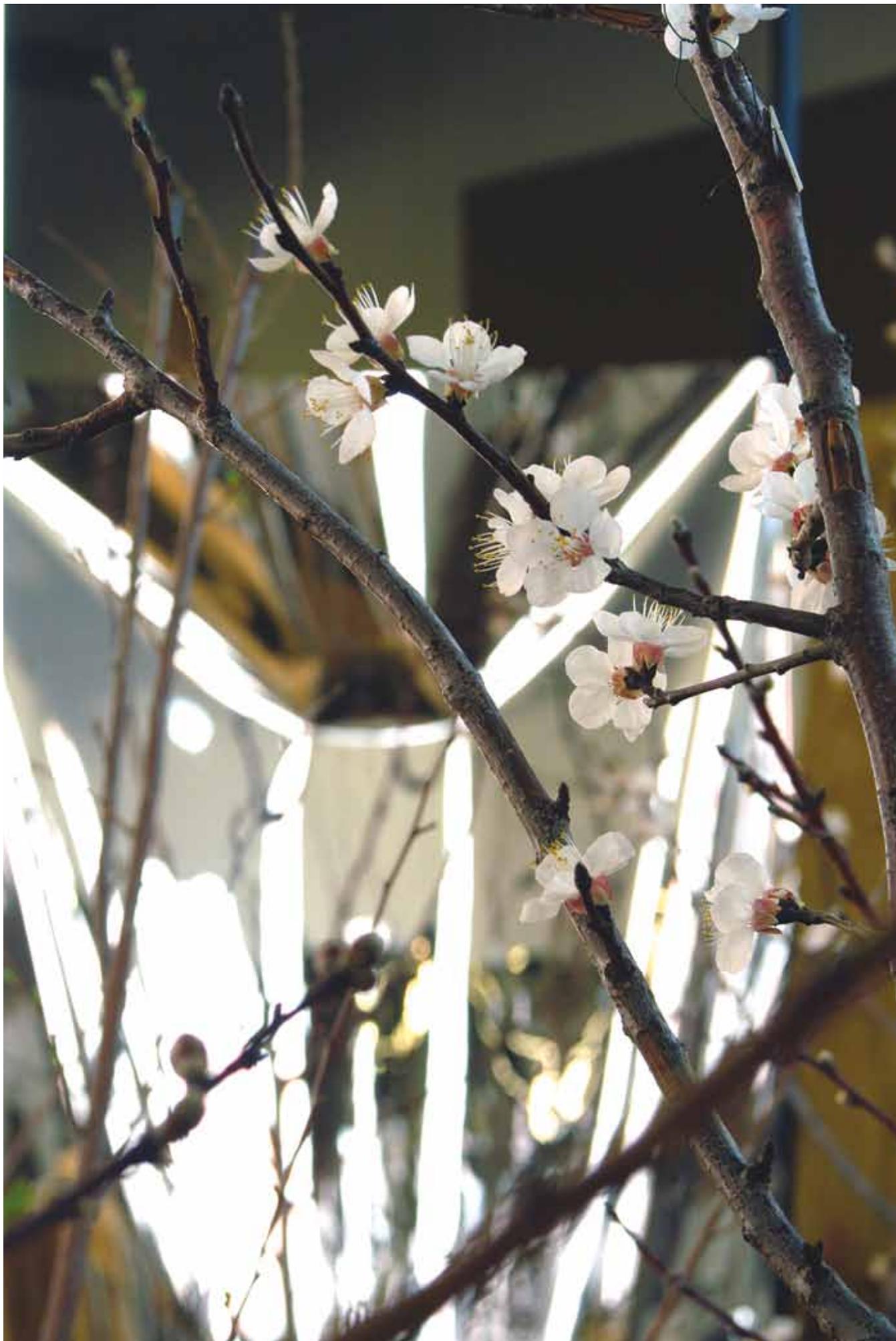
Trees of 100 Fruit, 2011
artist rendering

The *Trees of 100 Fruits*, similar to the *Trees of 40 Fruits* in aim, will take at least fifteen years to complete. This rendering imagines the tree in a bleak urban landscape in April, blossoming before most other plants begin to grow.

of a “mother tree” rootstock accepting the interstock of its partner(s) to create a distinctively individual sort of offspring prompts associations with human reproduction. Notably, Van Aken’s trees can be understood as a metaphor for the current multiple medical alternatives for conceiving (such as surrogacy, ovum donation, or artificial insemination) and the resultant genetic diversity between parents and offspring. Van Aken’s meddling in the act of reproduction tests the biological limits of creation.

Since the realization of his project, Van Aken has planted several trees in Kentucky, Massachusetts, and New York. Johnny Appleseed—an infamous nurseryman and American agrarian hero—may come to mind when thinking about Van Aken’s thriving orchards and the multiple plantings of these oddly abundant trees. While Jonny Appleseed may serve as a somewhat comic, folksy foil to Van Aken as an ambitious artist, the former (also known as a peripatetic backwoods missionary) nonetheless emblemizes the kinds of early nineteenth-century American efforts to “civilize,” or cultivate, the wild frontier, particularly with religious zeal. Although Appleseed opposed grafting, other early nineteenth-century farmers in the United States valued new methods of propagation, and grafted plants were bought from specialists regarded as artisans. Because grafting was not a common farm skill, it was seen somewhat as a mystery and an impressive undertaking. Grafted fruit trees were not considered to be mere commodities grown from seed, but were valued as hand-crafted living products requiring care for several years.² Van Aken takes horticulture as an artistic case study in creation and materiality and seems to ask: how do you control something (nature) which seems uncontrollable?

Interestingly, Van Aken’s unprecedented horticultural attempts mirror the history of American expansionism, agriculture, and commercialism. Just as Johnny Appleseed and others changed the agrarian landscape and adapted Old World plants to new climates as they moved westward, Van Aken also creates a New World. Thomas Jefferson feared that Old World plant species would not survive or thrive in North America, but he nonetheless envisioned a lush garden at Monticello filled with cherries, peaches, pomegranates, and grafted apricots, almonds, and nectarines.³ Horticultural historian Philip Pauly describes American independence as “a biohistorical event,” a transformation of the landscape in the wake of experiments in American democracy, identity, and capitalism.⁴ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, America was seen as a New Eden with a vehement emphasis on religious freedom and the emergence of zealous new religions, utopian communities, and newfound evangelical fervor among established denominations as America expanded westward. Imagining this New American Eden as a verdant garden made better by biotechnological advancements and open to a reclaiming, renaming, and resettling of the land, provides the historical backdrop to Van Aken’s visionary experiments.



Trees of 40 Fruits, 2011
acrylic containers, soil, aluminum,
stone fruit trees (detail)

A New Eden

In his work Van Aken mediates the role of nature as a subject of art and science through inherently biblical allusions. The symbolism of the tree in art is broad in its historical and cultural associations; it has longstanding connotations of fertility, seasonality, and lineage. For Van Aken, the Christian implications are explicit in this work. Beginning with his title *New Edens*, Van Aken, of course, refers specifically to Genesis (2:8-20): “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (2:9).⁵ The emergence of Eve from Adam’s rib, coupled with the widespread depiction of Eve emerging from Adam’s side as he sleeps, is an act of creation akin to the process of grafting. Van Aken is not simply placing himself—or the role of the artist—into the position of a god-like creator; rather, he questions the act of creation itself—as scientific, artistic, calculated or naturally (or divinely?) predetermined.

By choosing forty fruits to grow on his trees, Van Aken also calls attention to the biblical significance of the number forty. The repetition of this number in the Bible—the forty days of rain during the Deluge, the forty years of the Israelites in the wilderness, the forty days of fasting and penitence during Lent, among many other instances—frequently represents a period of testing, judging, and communing with God. The possibility that a tree may bear more than one fruit may be found in Revelation 22:2; the “Dozen-Fruit Tree” produces twelve kinds of fruit every month. Like its counterpart in the Garden of Eden, this sanctified plant is also called “the tree of life”:

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] the tree of life, which bore twelve [manner of] fruits, [and] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [were] for the healing of the nations.⁶

The kind of diversity that is represented by a many-fruited tree is what prompts this association with “the healing of the nations.” This autumn, Syracuse University planted one of these trees in commemoration of the attacks on September 11, 2001 as “a metaphor for themes reflecting acceptance, globalism and multiculturalism.”⁷ Like the passage in Revelation, it was planted to represent hope, bounty, and healing. Van Aken focuses not on the Fall of Man—the eating of the forbidden fruit on “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”—but rather on the idea of “New Eden,” the redemption of this original sin. By conjuring a plurality of *Edens*, Van Aken does not bind himself to a singular site or a reconstruction of a past place, but prompts his viewer to envision the new with the additional promise of ensuing fecundity.

Science, Fantasy, and Spectacle

Van Aken's approach to nature is quite unlike preceding artistic depictions of the Garden of Eden, particularly given his fantastical, futuristic maze-like installation of silver Mylar, glowing fluorescent lights, and shiny metal stands. In place of the expansive paradise seen in paintings of Eden by Rubens or Brueghel, Van Aken creates a horticultural setting that perhaps shares more in common with grand nineteenth-century expositions. Compared with the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851, for example, which offered exhibitions of raw materials, horticulture, machinery, and fine art, including full-size living trees on display within the Great Exhibition building, *New Edens'* trees situated within the architecture of the gallery likewise show man's prowess over nature. The Crystal Palace Exposition along with other grand world's fairs that followed later in the century focused on the command of the technological over the natural. At the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco, fireworks, steam, and artificial light spectacles imitated lightning and weather. Van Aken creates similarly and strangely remarkable spectacles in his other bodies of work—quasi-cinematic and multi-media installations—to examine the synthesis of reality and fantasy. "Throughout my work I have been infatuated with the notion of the 'real,'" Van Aken explains, "whether it is carrying the fictive into reality, looking at how mediation affects real experience, or making the intangible real." Ultimately, the conclusion Van Aken's viewers often draw is that the fictional and the realistic, and in this case—the artificial and the natural—coalesce into a single phenomenon.

Although Van Aken's trees are intended eventually to be planted and tended to in the outdoors, the exhibition within a gallery space and adjacent to his orchids, prints, collages, fluorescent tubes, and shiny pedestals, pays a kind of homage to Crystal Palace architect and gardener Joseph Paxton's impressive greenhouse-type structure. The enormous cast-iron and glass building for England's Great Exhibition, an engineering marvel, was constructed to display innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Van Aken replaced Paxton's iron and glass, both of which were seen as quite advanced technological building materials at the time, with aluminum and Mylar. If the large glass and metal structures symbolized a technological future in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Van Aken uses his industrial materials to a comparable effect. The clear acrylic boxes, reflective Mylar, mirrored containers, and aluminum stands suggest a set from a science-fiction fantasy. Van Aken's strange juxtaposition of the antiseptic and the verdant alludes to scientific, even space-age efforts to rethink traditional agricultural production and its reliance on land, light, soil, and fertilizers. For instance, NASA reports that crew members aboard the International Space Station are able to grow edible plants in their "space garden."⁸ Van Aken takes the greenhouse from the garden to the gallery, and the installation looks more like a space station than a farm as he conflates the interior with the exterior, nature with culture, art with science.



Trees of 40 Fruits, 2011
acrylic containers, soil,
aluminum, stone fruit trees,
fluorescent lights, Mylar,
installation at The 2011
Armory Show, New York City,
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Grafted Orchids, 2011
 wood, mirrors, Plexi-glas,
 2 different varieties of orchids,
 soil, aluminum pedestals

In addition to his trees, Van Aken displays orchids placed within mirrored boxes on aluminum pedestals. He grafts two varieties together, and strangely, one orchid will take over or consume the other. He doesn't know in advance which orchid will dominate, but this act of destruction within creation, or what Van Aken calls a kind of cannibalism, is the negative counterpart to the lushness and fertility of the trees of forty fruits. Additionally, an orchid's spots are often thought to be representative of the blood of Christ.⁹ Whereas the orchid is equated with suffering, the trees evoke fertility, plenty, and promise. In the nineteenth century, orchids were cherished for their seeming exoticism. Following prominent displays of extraordinary orchids at the Crystal Palace, Victorians launched an orchid craze, and orchid hunters returned from the tropics with rare and valuable species transported in glass Wardian cases. These prized orchids demonstrated the reach of the British Empire, as the Victorians seized control of a flower native to its tropical colonies. If the genetic diversity of Van Aken's grafted fruit trees stands as a positive metaphor for the sustainable coexistence of diverse races and cultures and the healing of the nations, then Van Aken's grafted orchids remind one of the often violent and destructive outcomes of one culture "overtaking" another through colonization, imperialism, and naturalization.

From Minimalism to Versailles

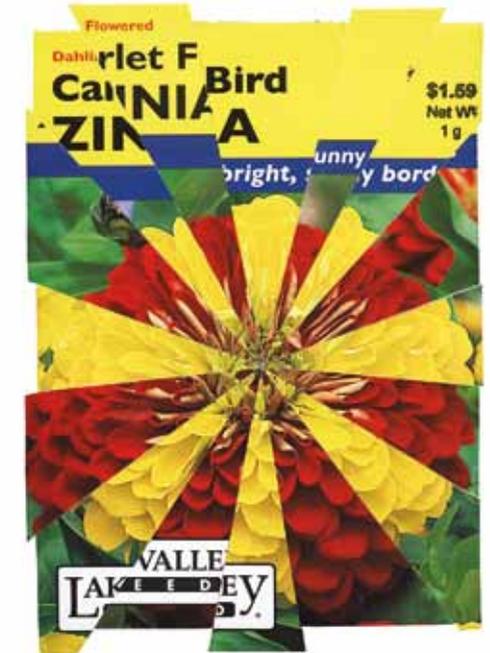
Van Aken grows what he has called a "bizarre baroque orchard" and a kind of "contemporary version of Louis XIV's gardens."¹⁰ Indeed, Van Aken creates a strangely mirrored and fantastic imposition on nature somewhat akin to the lavishly ordered grounds of Versailles. His critical conflation of the industrial with the natural in his choice of medium, however, recalls Minimalism's emphasis on the experiential act of viewing their as well as the use of unconventional materials such as dirt, mirrors, plywood, steel, and rocks in artworks of the late 1960s. For example, Van Aken's acrylic planters and reflective surfaces pay a sort of homage Robert Smithson's *Nonsites* (1968-69) and Robert Morris's mirrored cubes (1965). Moreover, the fluorescent lights are suggestive of Dan Flavin and the tangle of cords of Morris's *Scatter Piece* (1968-69). Whereas Smithson's boxes of rocks evoke an industrial site, a landscape redolent of industrial decay, Van Aken argues against the state of entropy that Smithson saw as an inevitable and defining characteristic of modernity. "Instead of putting a work of art on some land," Smithson writes, "some land is put into a work of art. Between the site and the *Nonsite* one may lapse into places of little organization and no direction."¹¹ Van Aken's mirrored installations and clear boxes are reminiscent of his Minimalist predecessors; however, he provides direction for verdant growth and thus contradicts Smithson's sites of degeneration.

Looking more contemporaneously, perhaps Jeff Koons's monumentally constructed topiaries, such as *Puppy* (1992, installation Arolsen, Germany) or *Split Rocker* (2008, installation Chateau de Versailles, France) comprised of a phenomenal number of live flowering plants arranged on steel and soil structures with built-in irrigation systems, are more similar to Van Aken's in their use of natural materials. Van Aken's sculptures, like those of Koons, are carefully crafted and highly organized untraditional creations that emphasize lush abundance and hybridization. A prime example is seen in *Split Rocker*, a form with two slightly incongruent halves. It should be noted, albeit in passing, that other contemporaries such as Roxy Paine, Mark Dion and Phoebe Washburn also examine in various ways the intersection of the natural with the artificial and the imposition of order onto natural phenomena of decay. If Koons's somewhat comical and exaggerated horticultural deftness provides the dialectical instance of Morris's formless installations of scattered felt, mirrors, wood, copper tubing, and steel cable or Smithson's entropic *Asphalt Rundown* (1969), Van Aken's work falls somewhere in between the theoretical impulses of Minimalism and the opulent formality of Versailles.

"We tend to equate nature with beauty and in turn truth," Van Aken states. "But this idea of nature seems to have changed. We no longer seem to accept things on their ideal or inherent value but for their effect." In looking at Van Aken's prints and collages—brightly colored combinations of sunflowers and morning glories, zinnias and dahlias, marigolds and bachelor's buttons—one sees the parts combining into a dizzying whole. He splices and spirals the seed packets' pictures of flowers, vegetables and fruits that present an ideal that few everyday gardeners achieve, but all desire. One notices the needs of each plant for sun and water, traces of dirt, and the date of expiration, to realize that these seeds are not mere commodities, but living things with the potential for sustenance, beauty, and abundance.

While it is rather rare for a sculptor to have such extensive and quite serious horticultural expertise as Van Aken, his interest in the literal act of creation as an artistic process provides quite fertile ground (pun intended) for examining the nature of contemporary art. Van Aken's work is best understood as a utopic rumination with a keen awareness of past art and present politics. Van Aken does not provide nature as a place of unreachable Arcadian idyll or ruinous decay, but rather offers it as a subject for both nuanced reflection and subtle admonition in its modern-day iterations and future possibilities.

—Shannon Egan, Ph.D.
Director, Schmucker Art Gallery



Marigold/Malva, 2011
inkjet print on archival paper
36" x 30"
edition of 8

Zinnia Spiral, 2011
inkjet print on archival paper
37" x 25"
edition of 8

Sweet Long Pepper/Cucumber, 2011
inkjet print on archival paper
36" x 30"

Chinese Apricot/Stanley Plum, 2011
inkjet print on archival paper
40" x 30"
edition of 8



SAM VAN AKEN

Sam Van Aken's art combines sophisticated technology with traditional modes of art-making. Van Aken's projects cross boundaries between artistic genres, including performance, installation, video, photography, and sculpture. With each body of work, he selects practices and new perspectives that provide a kinesthetic perception of objects and a visceral charge.

Born in Reading Pennsylvania, Sam Van Aken received his undergraduate education in Communication Theory and Art. Immediately following his studies he lived and worked in Poland under the auspices of the Andy Warhol Foundation and the United States Information Agency. Returning after several years in Europe, Van Aken received his MFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2001. Since this time his work has been exhibited nationally and internationally receiving numerous honors including a Joan Mitchell Award, Association of International Curator's of Art Award and a 2009 Creative Capital Grant. Sam Van Aken is currently an Associate Professor in the Art Department at Syracuse University.

www.samvanaken.com

Representation
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts
New York, New York

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- 1 Melanie Grayce West, "When Apricot Met Plum...In the Search for Perfect Fruit, Breeders Create Odd, New Hybrids," *Wall Street Journal*, September 7, 2011.
 - 2 David Diamond, "Origins of Pioneer Apple Orchards in the American West: Random Seeding versus Artisan Horticulture," *Agricultural History*, vol. 84, no. 4 (2010), 438.
 - 3 Peter J. Hatch, *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of Monticello* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 6-7.
 - 4 Philip J. Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 32.
 - 5 Genesis 2:9, Authorized King James Version Bible.
 - 6 Revelation 2:22, Authorized King James Version Bible.
 - 7 Gloria Wright, "Tree of 40 Fruit: SU sculptor's creation commemorates 9/11," <http://blog.syracuse.com>, September 10, 2011.
 - 8 Lori Meggs, "Growing Plants and Vegetables in a Space Garden," http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/research/10-074.html, June 15, 2010.
 - 9 D.C. Watts, *Dictionary of Plant Lore* (Amsterdam and Boston: Elsevier/AP, 2007), 92.
 - 10 "Sam Van Aken: On 'Eden,' Maine, A Conversation with Jade Dellinger," exhibition brochure, Ethel H. Blum Gallery, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine, 2008.
 - 11 Robert Smithson, typewritten text of *Nonsite (The Palisades, Edgewater, New Jersey)*, 1968, painted aluminum, enamel and stone (55 7/8 x 26 x 35 7/8), typed description, and map (9 7/8 x 7 1/2), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase, with funds from the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

- 2011 *New Edens*, The 2011 Armory Show, Exhibited with Ronald Feldman Fine Art
- 2010 *I am here today...*, Hallwalls Gallery, Buffalo, New York
- 2008 *Audition*, Rochester Contemporary, Rochester, New York
- 2008 *Eden*, College of the Atlantic, Mt. Desert Island, Maine
- 2008 *High Lonesome*, Tacheles Kunsthhaus, Berlin, Germany
- 2007 *Killer Tomatoes*, University of North Carolina Sculpture Garden, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- 2007 *New Transmitters for the Same Old Stupidities*, Whitney Artworks, Portland, Maine
- 2005 *Currents2*, Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine
- 2005 *Becoming*, The University of Maine Art Galleries, University of Maine, Orono Maine
- 2004 *Hybrids*, The Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst Massachusetts
- 2003 *The Multiple Deaths of Willem Dafoe*, The Project Room, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 2003 *In Between*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, Maine
- 2003 *Filler*, Mobius Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts
- 2001 *New Currents in Contemporary Art*, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill North Carolina
- 2000 *For Your Eyes Only*, Lump Gallery, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 2000 *Degenerator*, John and June Alcott Gallery, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 *Taking Shape*, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, New York
- 2011 *En Garde*, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, New York
- 2010 *Seven-Miami with Ronald Feldman Fine Arts*, Miami, Florida
- 2009 *Portland Museum of Art Biennial*, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine
- 2009 *Four in Maine*, Farnsworth Museum of Art, Rockland, Maine
- 2008 *The Everson Biennial*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
- 2007 *Portland Museum of Art Biennial*, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine
- 2007 *The Other Biennial*, Whitney Artworks Congress St., Portland, Maine
- 2006 *Challenges in Contemporary Art*, The Lowe Gallery at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
- 2006 *Dallas Video Art Festival*, Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Dallas, Texas
- 2006 *Baja to Bar Harbor: Transnational Contemporary Art, Institute for Contemporary*, Art Portland, Maine
- 2006 *LandEscapes*, Mount Desert Island, Maine
- 2005 *The Water Show*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, Maine
- 2004 *The Home Show*, University of New England, Portland, Maine
- 2004 *DNA: Art & Science, The Double Helix*, University of Southern Florida Contemporary Art Museum

- 2004 *University of North Carolina Graduate School Bicentennial Alumni Exhibition*, John and June Alcott Gallery, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- 2003 *Figureheads*, Artempresa Gallery, Cordoba, Argentina
- 2003 *Frag*, Evos Art Institute, Lowell, Massachusetts
- 2002 *University of Maine Art Department Faculty Exhibition*, University of Maine Museum of Art, Orono, Maine
- 2002 *Queer Visualities: Reframing Sexuality in the Post Warhol World*, Staller Art Center, Stonybrook, New York
- 2002 *The Center for Maine Contemporary Art 2002 Biennial*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, Maine
- 2002 *Plugged In*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, Maine

COLLECTIONS

- 21C Museum and Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky
- Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine
- Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, PPortland, Oregon
- University of North Carolina, Smith Hall, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- University of North Carolina, Sculpture Garden, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

GRANTS/AWARDS/RESIDENCIES

- 2011 Finalist NYFA Individual Artist Fellowship in Sculpture
- 2010 Joan Mitchell Foundation Award for Painters and Sculptors
- 2010 Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center Artist In Residence supported by the National Endowment of the Arts
- 2009 Chautauqua Art Institute Residency
- 2009 Creative Capital Grant in Emerging Fields
- 2008 Artist in Residence, Tacheles Kunsthhaus, Berlin, Germany
- 2007 Maine Arts Commission, Individual Artist Fellowship
- 2007 Juror's Award for Outstanding Artistic Achievement Portland Museum of Art 2007 Biennial
- 2006 AICA (Association of International Critics of Art), Exhibition Award for Baja to Bar Harbor: Transnational Contemporary Art Exhibition
- 2006 Honorarium, Dallas Video Art Festival, Dallas, Texas
- 2006 Commission, University of North Carolina Sculpture Garden
- 2006 Visting Artist, l'Ecole Nationale Superieure d'Arts de Cergy-Pontoise
- 2006 University of Maine Research and Development Grant
- 2004 Maine Arts Commission Good Idea Grant

EDUCATION

- 2001 M.F.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- 1996 Masters Level Coursework, State Academy of Fine Arts Poznan, Poland
- 1995 B.A. Fine Art, Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania
- 1995 B.A. Communication, Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania

PUBLICATIONS/BROADCASTS

- May/June 2011 "The Un Edenic State of Copyright," Art Asia Pacific, Essay by Chin Chin Yap
- March 4, 2011 "Neon is the Sign of the Times," *The Wall Street Journal* (online edition), Review by Alexandra Cheney
- March 4, 2011 "Armory Show," Italian *Vogue*, Jordan Hruska
- March 3, 2011 "Free-for-All Spirit Breezes Into a Vast Art Fair," *The New York Times*, Review by Roberta Smith
- March 3, 2011 "Armory Show 2011: A Guide to the Must-See Art," *The Wall Street Journal*
- March 3, 2011 "Dealers at Armory Look for Independent Identities," *Art in America*, Review by Stephanie Cash
- March 3, 2011 "Nine Best (and Five Worst) Booths of Armory Show," Artinfo.com
- March 3, 2011 "Manhattan's ADAA Art Show and Armory Show set to Dazzle international collectors," *The Art Economist*, Brook S. Mason
- March 3, 2011 "Going Contemporary at the Armory," Hyperallergic, Review by Hrag Vartanian
- March 3, 2011 "The fruits of Van Aken's labour," *The Art Newspaper*, Anny Shaw
- January 19, 2011 "'En Garde II: omg' at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts," *The Village Voice*, Review by Robert Shuster
- December 8, 2010 "Seven," *Art Slant*, Review by Charlie Schultz
- December 6, 2010 "Seven Miami: The Highlight of Art Basel," *Miami New Times*
- December 1, 2010 "Miami's Seven Art Fair Goes Indie," Hyperallergic.com
- 2010 "i am here today..." Exhibition Catalogue, Published by Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center
- May 17, 2010 "Hoax as Art," Center for Inquiry, Review by Joe Nickell
- April 23, 2010 "Artful Hoax," *Buffalo News*
- 2010 Exhibition Catalogue, Armory Show, New York City
- 2009 *Sounds and Perception*, Matthew Nudds and Casey O'Callaghan, Oxford University Press (cover art)
- May 11, 2009 "Maine event," *Boston Globe*, Review by Sebastian Smee
- April 14, 2009 "Portland Museum of Art's Biennial Atypical artistry," *Sun Journal*, Lewiston, Maine

- 2009 Portland Museum of Art Biennial, Exhibition Catalogue
- 2009 "Four from Maine," Exhibition Catalogue, Published by the Farnsworth Museum of Art
- 2009 "High Lonesome," Exhibition Catalogue, High Lonesome, Sam Van Aken, Published by the Tacheles Art Center
- December 2008 *Eden, Art in New England*, Feature Review by Carl Little
- 2008 *Eden*, Interview with Jade Dellinger, Published by College of the Atlantic
- November 5, 2008 *Audition by Sam Van Aken*, Rochester City News Review by Rebecca Rafferty
- October 3, 2008 *The Wall*, Interview with Brenda Trembley, WXXI, NPR radio affiliate Rochester, New York
- January 19, 2008 *The Portland Biennial* from the Incredible Maine Series, Maine Public Broadcasting Network
- Januray 12, 2008 *Reichstag Cowboy*, Berlin Kurier
- January 11, 2008 *Wildwest ver dom Reichstag*, Berliner Zeitung Newspaper
- January 11, 2008 *Wildwest ver dom Reichstag*, StarPoop.com
- January 10, 2008 *High Lonesome*-Reuters News Agency
- 2007 *SOUNDS*, Casey O'Callaghan, Oxford University Press (cover art)
- May 10, 2007 "Free Beer: Sam Van Aken at Whitney Artworks," *Portland Phoenix*
- 2007 March/April Issue "Sam Van Aken," *Artscope Magazine*, pg. 34, Exhibition Preview
- 2007 Portland Museum of Art Biennial, Exhibition Catalogue
- April 15, 2007 "Van Aken Claims Juror's Award," *Portland Press Herald*
- April 11, 2007 "Odd Year, Great Work: 2007 Portland Museum of Art Biennial, Portland Phoenix
- April 8, 2007 "What Maine art is all about," *Portland Press Herald*
- Fall Issue 2006 "The Role of the University Art Gallery," *Art Journal*, pg. 30
- 2006 Oct./Nov. Issue *Art in New England Magazine*-Regional Review, pg. 23
- Fall Edition 2006 "LandEscapes Review," *Maine Arts Commission Magazine*

July 21-27, 2006
“‘Like Wow’ From Baja to Bar Harbor: Transnational Contemporary Art,” *The Portland Phoenix*

2006
Currents 2: Sam Van Aken, Exhibition Catalogue, Published by the Colby College Museum of Art

May/June Issue 2006
“Altered States,” *UMaine Today Magazine*, feature article pg. 10

February 4, 2006
“Close Encounters with a Buick,” feature article, *Maine Morning Sentinel*, front page

January 22, 2006
“One Man’s Close Encounter,” front page feature article, *Portland Press Herald*

March 11, 2005
“Close Encounters,” follow up feature *Bangor Daily News*

May 16, 2004
“Home,” *Maine Sunday Telegram*

February 12, 2004
“Fruitarian,” *Daily Advocate*

February 10, 2004
“When apples, oranges are one,” *Daily Hampshire Gazette*

February 4, 2004
“Hybrids,” *The Massachusetts Daily Collegian*

September 30, 2003
“Close Encounters,” feature *Bangor Daily News*

September 11, 2003
Portland Press Herald

February 8, 2003
“To Go Tonight,” *The Boston Globe*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2006-Present
Associate Professor of Art, Syracuse University, New York

2010 Artist Lecture, Rhode Island School of Design

2010 Artist Lecture, University of Binghamton

2010 Artist Lecture, Dickinson College

2009 Artist Lecture, Portland Museum of Art

2009 Artist Lecture, Pratt at Munson Williams Proctor

2009 Artist Lecture, Farnsworth Art Museum

2008 Artist Lecture, Maine College of Art

2008 Artist Talk, Rochester Contemporary

2008 Panel Presentation, *ID-Self Portraiture in Contemporary Art*, Southeastern College Art Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana

2008 Artist Lecture, Munson Williams, Proctor Art Institute at Pratt

2007 Portland Museum of Art, 2007 Biennial Artist Lecture Series

2006 Artist Lecture, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2006 Visiting Artist, l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Cergy-Pontoise

2001-2006
Assistant Professor of Art, University of Maine

2004-2006
Maine Arts Commission Percent for Art Juror

2006 Artist Lecture, The Warehouse Gallery, Syracuse University

2006 Artist Lecture, Institute for Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art

2006 Artist Lecture, Brown University

2005 Artist Lecture, Colby College Museum of Art

2004 Juror, *Plugged in Fest II*

2004 Artist Lecture, Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

2003 Artist Lecture, The Center for Contemporary Art Rockport, ME

2003 Artist Talk, Mobius, Boston MA

2003 Artist Lecture, Brandeis University

2002 Artist Lecture, University of the South

2002 Panel Discussion, *Plugged In Fest*, Center for Maine Contemporary Art

2001 Visiting Lecturer, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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FRONT COVER:

Trees of 40 Fruits, 2011, acrylic containers, soil, aluminum, stone fruit trees, fluorescent lights, Mylar, installation at The 2011 Armory Show, New York City, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

October 21 – December 10, 2011

Gettysburg
COLLEGE

Schmucker Art Gallery

300 North Washington Street
Schmucker Hall
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
17325-1485

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