Carrie Haddad Gallery is pleased to present ‘Natural Worlds’, a group exhibit featuring new mixed media by local artists Jeri Eisenberg, Louise Laplante, Allyson Levy, and Lori Van Houten. In recent months, nature has provided priceless solace for many of us. Its power to relieve stress, energize, and aspire moments of awe has helped many get through this difficult time. The artists in this exhibit have distilled those simple joys in new series of painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture. ‘Natural Worlds’ will be on view June 10th - July 26th. Opening receptions are postponed until further notice. The show will be available online until the gallery can reopen. We cannot wait to share this work with you in person so, when the time comes, we have established protocols to keep you safe during your visit!

After moving to rural upstate New York 19 years ago, mixed media artist, Allyson Levy, has developed a bountiful 4-acre botanical garden with her husband, Scott Serrano. The Level II Arboretum, called Hortus Conclusus, specializes in rare fruit plants from around the world and has become the main source of inspiration to her work that combines natural material collected from the garden in layers of beeswax and encaustic. New paintings include whimsical arrangements of foraged snow flower and hydrangea petals, monarch butterfly wings, and cannabis leaves on wood panels. Levy explains “I realized I can’t make nature more beautiful than she already is, so in my little attempts in my studio, it’s about how to present it differently so you’re seeing a part of nature that you take for granted.”

As an artist and professional gardener, she is particularly interested in how organic material changes from effects of decomposition, temperature, wind, and sunlight. By encapsulating the material in wax, Levy freezes her subject in time and communicates the beauty found in the brief moments of its inevitable life cycle. During this process, she has accumulated an ex-situ seed library, preserving seeds of plants she not only loves but are also under threat of becoming extinct. She daydreams how a scientist thousands of years from now could use her artwork to repopulate lost plant species. Levy has shown with the gallery since 2000 and exhibits regionally on an annual basis.

Louise Laplante returns with new drawings of charcoal silhouettes juxtaposed with collaged pages of vintage paper. The playful compositions begin with a background of layered antique paper collected from handwritten letters, books, music sheets, or gardening manuals. The pre-existing text and illustrations then inspire a motif of opaque stenciled patterns ranging from fanciful bird flocks, exuberant figures, or prancing rabbits. Each piece involves a balanced structure of shape and tone, with a palette largely limited to black, grey, and the occasional use of brick red. More recently, the artist has broadened her spectrum of color saying it offers new ways to respond to the underlying text and creates more pattern possibilities. Vibrant hues of cerulean blue, blood orange, and forest green are chosen specifically for their ability to complement the stains found on the antique yellowed paper, breathing new life into the ephemera of the past. Laplante exhibits across the Northeast and has shown with Carrie Haddad for more than ten years.

Photographer Jeri Eisenberg captures fleeting moments in nature with a defocused lens. The subtly blurred images of natural wonders fade in and out of recognizable form to “echo our ephemeral grasp on life”. They are further abstracted on segmented panels of Japanese Kozo paper infused with a delicate layer of matte encaustic. This exhibit features selections from three series; Hard Light / Hot Color, made during an artist residency in Central Florida, Wild
Fennel & Acacia, inspired by her travels to the Peloponnese and Puglia, and a continuation of A Sojourn in Seasons, which the artist began when her father began losing both vision and memory. Revising the six-chapter body of work, Eisenberg captures magenta Canna lilies with her signature soft-focus technique. She exhibits internationally and is included in prestigious collections such as the Museum of Fine Art is Houston, Texas and the Albany Institute of History and Art in Albany, New York.

Lori Van Houten will present a new series of multi-panel photographic works, entitled Raptors and Songbirds, which is inspired by the long tradition of storytelling as a means of understanding human experience. She explores the concept of fairytales and how they use the divine or supernatural to teach valuable life lessons to young women in particular. Romantic images constructed into triptychs form visual narratives that shed light on the way these tales are told: graceful swans, dimly lit chandeliers, or the delicate folds of a silk dress seduce the audience while symbolic details of flora and fauna act as cautionary messengers. The compositions are made with photographs shot with modified Polaroid cameras, allowing the artist to record motion, alter color, and provide a slightly skewed vision. This fragmented juxtaposition of dream-like images implies a story that is told over time. Van Houten explains “my goal is not to tell a complete tale but to suggest phrases of sentences overheard in passing.”

Van Houten added a three-dimensional aspect to the photographic triptychs with a series of unglazed porcelain crowns, intended for the young women listening to or featured in the fictional narratives. The delicate porcelain crowns, made with textiles and other mixed materials, are preserved in glass domes, further alluding to their fantastical aura. Van Houten’s BA is from Syracuse University and MFA from Southern Illinois University. She has exhibited extensively throughout the US and Europe.