

GALLERIES

Art Review: Patrick Jacobs Takes a Look at the Vision Thing

By [Will Heinrich](#) • 02/09/11 1:05am



Patrick Jacobs set seven round lenses into the white walls of Pierogi Gallery in Williamsburg. Behind them you'll think you see close-up, ground-level photographs of pretty, green meadows. (The largest view is monochrome, but the rest are in color.) Far off beyond the fields are winding roads, rivers, bridges, power lines, hills and, in two cases, little towns. It is an otherworldly, overcast day. One town has its lights on and the other doesn't. But all these evidences of human industry and geologic

upheaval are safely in the distance.

Because of the lenses, they aren't merely images. They're singular, fully formed views. *Window (View of the Gowanus Heights #2)*, the only piece not set in a field, has us looking out through an apartment window, but it isn't a doubling—it's an opposition. There's no question of choosing what we're interested in looking at. What interests us is the dandelions, mushrooms and fairy rings that crowd up to the glass. (A fairy ring is a circle of darker grass formed by mushrooms spreading underground, or a gateway by which fairies can enter or leave our world.)

In *Fairy Ring (with Dandelions)*, *Fairy Ring with White Clover* and *Fairy Ring with English Daisies*, a single inviting ring lies directly in the center. The rings in *Three Fairy Rings (in Monochrome)*, alone in the back room, retreat across a dark gray landscape like craters on the moon. And in *Small Fairy Ring Mushroom Cluster*, *Small Fairy Ring with Mushrooms* and *Dandelion Cluster*, the usually inconspicuous fungus and weed proudly pose for us. The mushrooms look like family portraits-in each case there are two tall and two short-but the yellow dandelions, leaning out tightly from an older white chieftain in the middle, are like a posse of young blades on their way out to a fight.

If you lean down close to them, the lens will distort the scene so that you're looking at it underwater. If you stand up again, you can almost see one of the flowers, frozen in the moment, reaching up to smooth his hair. If you take a few steps back, plants and sky mesh into a static nature scene. From across the gallery, the bright circle leaps out from the wall, like a globular teardrop in space, or a view of heaven, impossible to enter or touch.

People who don't believe in fairies think they're romantic, but people who do believe try not to mention them by name. In fact, Mr. Jacobs is not a photographer. In a tour de force of what you might call insider outsider art-the technically brilliant execution of a strange, obsessive idea-he's constructed detailed dioramas out of plastic, wood and hair. Through a window behind the back room, you can see the box housing one such diorama sitting on two-by-four struts. Fluorescent bulbs illuminate a paper sky through a plastic clamshell roof. For the past 500 years or so, we've been trying to make two dimensions into three, but now, it seems, it's time to try the other way around. It's hard to tell whether you're looking at these fairy rings or into them.

At Paula Cooper, Beatrice Caracciolo's "Cercare nella Terra" ("Searching the Earth") begins with eight gorgeous photogravures of Mediterranean fields and trees. Lush and heavy and dry, so lucid that they have no gray but only tones of black, they look like assemblages of woolly shadow. From a high, respectful distance we see the different stripes of different furrowed fields, or a single field with lines of growing plants receding like hand-spun yarn, or a field of white sunflowers under a broad gray sky. *Untitled (Tree)* (the rest of the pieces are simply *Untitled*), a regal, old-fashioned, full-length portrait of an enormous oak appears both as a small photogravure and as a six-and-a-half-foot-tall inkjet print.

Accompanying and inspired by the photos are a dozen etchings in which, with a thoughtful, hesitating, repetitive line, Ms. Caracciolo diagrams the skeletons of her Mediterranean fields by building shapes out of intersections and fragments. The etchings and photos are like reversals of each other. In the photos, empty space is black, and in the etchings, white. In the photos, mass is stronger than line, and nature is slightly blurred, as if it's nighttime during the day. The white sunflowers look like a contamination of the plate, and the oak like a Rorschach blot. But the etchings are nothing but edges and wire, outlines that seem to have body only because, like lightning, they move more quickly than we can see.

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