

## PEAKS

Barbara Friedman, Edie Nadelhaft, Brad Nelson, Joe Wardwell, Joni Wehrli, Hans Witschi

FROSCH&CO is pleased to present *Peaks*, featuring artists Barbara Friedman, Edie Nadelhaft, Brad Nelson, Joe Wardwell, Joni Wehrli, and Hans Witschi.

When do we peak? Peak fitness, peak health, peak attractiveness. All imply a climb to a fixed height—a climax of personal achievement. Yet peaks become moving goalposts to the mind's eye. We obscure and often only tangentially define our markers of success to avoid feeling underwhelmed. Why do we still feel inept and inadequate? What is left but impending decline?

*Peaks* examines the human desire for control in the face of the sublimity. Exploring this peculiarity of the human condition, the artists in *Peaks* release us of the self-imposed expectation to fight the inevitable march of time.

Barbara Friedman's *Alpträume* (Alpine Dreams, a play on the German word *Albtraum* (nightmare)) series illuminates the surreal vastness of nature. Picturesque chalets, villages, and all other signs of human life appear like snow globe miniatures amidst swirling expanses of Alpine elements, coming to terms with humanity's cosmic insignificance with an at once playful and nightmarish view towards the sublime. Meanwhile, Hans Witschi's dreamlike landscapes lack any cultural indications as if standing outside of time and space. The artist's vibrant compositions collapse infinite depths with no reference to scale, blurring lines between land and atmosphere and between nature, desire, and menacing visions.

Transgressing similar boundaries is Joe Wardwell, whose layered compositions combine landscape imagery with text and abstraction, creating tension between the elements as they strive for visual harmony. Song lyrics mimic advertising, undermining the natural imagery like botched self-help posters from a dystopic future. In a departure from landscape painting, Edie Nadelhaft's monochromatic portraits of cows elevate cattle to the genre of portraiture, a traditional symbol of landed wealth. Through this humorous and loving take on portraiture, the artist's Bovine portraits explore themes of repetition, existentialism, vanity and the impact of digital culture on visual experience.

Embracing a lack of control, Brad Nelson's mountain paintings visualize how beliefs are passed down through generations. The original mountainous forms bleed into the next iterations of the same image, which cling to these lines even as they fade and lose specificity over time, mirroring the randomness of environmental influences on our personal beliefs. Joni Wehrli, meanwhile, explores the mutable nature of "peaks" in her sculptures made of found spiky stumps. The sculptures' wooden bodies create an almost biomorphic topography of the outside world, liberating organic matter from the human-nature divide to form an all-encompassing sculptural landscape.

Ultimately, peaks exist within ranges forged by series of unexpected convergences. By ceasing to predetermine the undeterminable, we may just reach new heights.

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