

## Ephemeral moments: Yoonmi Nam and Amze Emmons at Grayduck Gallery

By Leslie Moody Castro - February 8, 2019



Amze Emmons "Ginkgo Season," 2018, Screen print, 18 x 24 inches. Edition of 30, printed at Bowling Green State University. Courtesy the artist and Grayduck Gallery.

The works on paper by Yoonmi Nam and Amze Emmons, on view at Grayduck Gallery in separate shows, illustrate the power of simple gestures on paper. Both Nam and Emmons reveal a concern with a sense of place, each capturing the ephemeral moments when nature shifts and changes.

Nam, who is based in Kansas, offers a body of work that requires viewers to take a pause in order to fully understand the work beyond its formal qualities. She situates the viewer in the split second when the future becomes past, growth stands still, and movement becomes static. There's an inexplicable irony that exists when humanity intervenes on the organic world. And also an irony when the objects that we make outlive any lifespan they were intended for, while nature surrounding them slowly withers away.

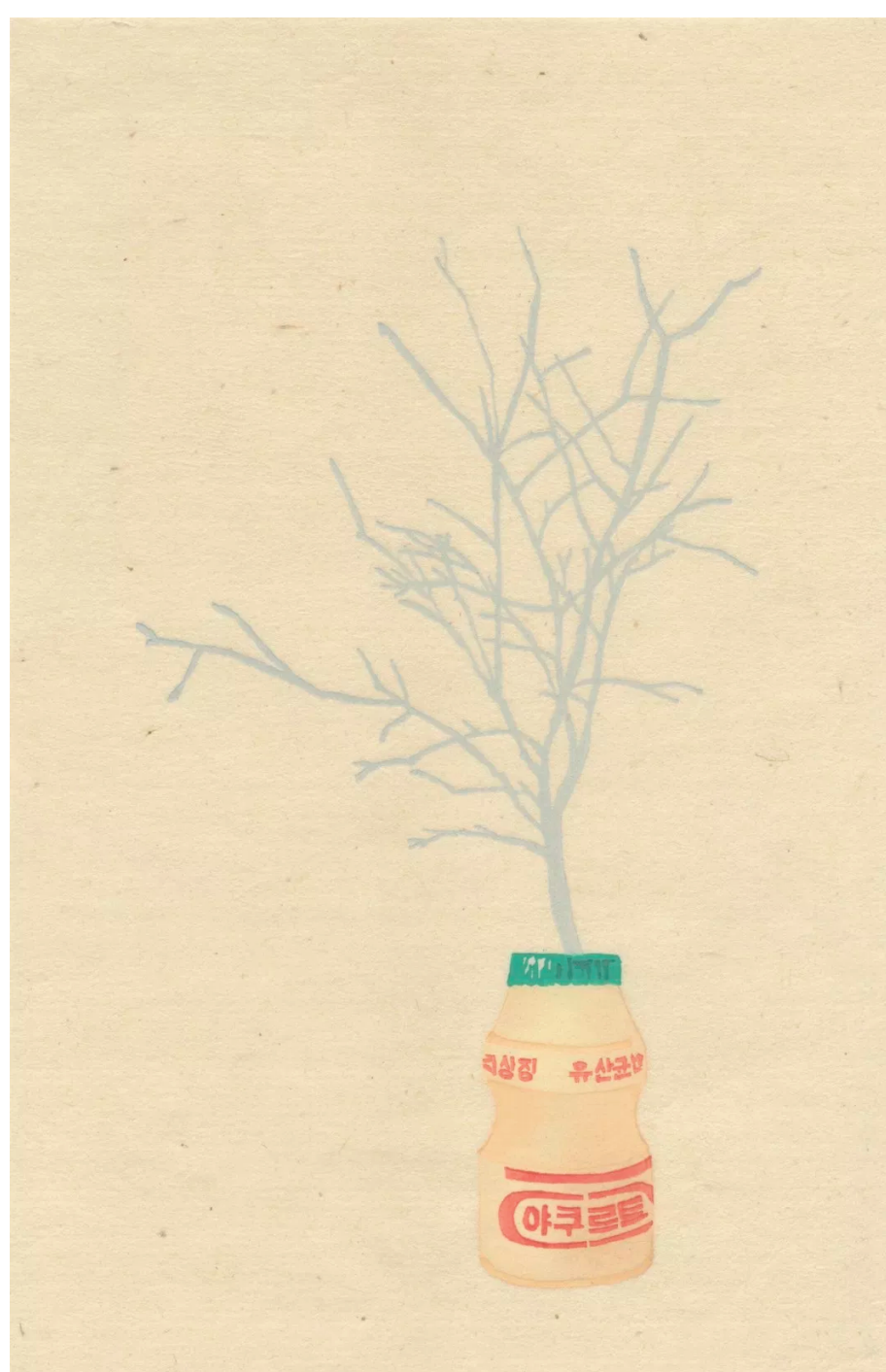
Nam's "Arranged Flowers" series of lithographs hang in the front room of the gallery. The work is quiet and subtle, almost monochromatic with the exception of a few soft touches demarcating the recognizable food industry logos of the improvised vases, or the grayish blue hues of the flowers themselves.



Yoonmi Nam, "Noodle," 2017, Lithograph, 23 x 22 inches. Edition 5/5. Courtesy the artist and Grayduck Gallery.

In each of the images, flowers have been snipped from their roots, then arranged in cast-off containers. Most of the flowers have been there for more than their lifespan. Some are at the brim of death, just moments before decay sets in. Some have begun to wither, and others are barely thriving.

The ersatz vases are symbolic of the global food industry. And yet the Styrofoam cups from McDonald's and Guys and Fries, or the squat plastic bottles of Yakult probiotic yogurt, are dwarfed by the blooms, the flowers billowing over the cups and containers. At work is nature's desire to survive never mind being stuffed into containers made of artificial material that will outlive the one-time use they were intended to have.



Yoonmi Nam, Yakult II, 2018, Mokuhanga, 10 x 6.5 inches. Edition 1/8. Courtesy the artist and Grayduck Gallery.

Similarly, the Philadelphia-based Emmons captures scenes of cities in transition and in that specific moment of time on the verge of change in his mixed media drawings and drawn prints.

In an eery pastel bluish-green that heightens what a quotidian moment it is in the urban landscape, "Reinventing Teamwork" depicts a dumpster flanked with piles of trash bags and detritus.



Amze Emmons, "Ecology of Possibilities." Copying pencil, colored pencil, roll leaf foil on handmade paper, 22x30, 2017. Courtesy the artist and Grayduck Gallery.

"Ecology of Possibilities" offers a glimpse of a momentary solution in the precarious balance of urban adaptation. Emmons reveals the practicality and dual usefulness of a public trash can when it becomes a place to anchor a bunch of balloons.

The artist's quiet playfulness also seeps through in the series of small works titled "Union Flying Squad", sculptural objects made of ink on plywood or CNC routed sign board. A cinderblock, a brick and trashed plastic water bottles and other objects that might be found on the street are given a new meaning, revalidated in the sleek white gallery.

Emmons spotlights familiar objects and city spaces that have been repurposed or given new agency reminding us of the residual beauty in the rough urban fabric and the transitions of our urban centers.

Taken together, Nam's "Arranged Flowers" and Emmons' "Momentarily" are two exhibitions that remind us of the ephemerality of time and transition.

"Arranged Flowers" and "Momentarily" continue through Feb. 24 at Grayduck Gallery.