

## “Fox in Floral Garland.”

The landscape and natural world have been a natural inspiration for artists visiting California and are struck by the state's many beautiful landscapes, flora, and fauna. California's rich tradition of nature art spans numerous significant works by artists including Ansel Adams, William Keith, and Albert Bierstadt. Later nature painters strayed from realistic depictions of natural splendor, instead choosing to interpret the world through a modernist lens, presenting the world in new ways and complicating the idea of purity in any natural scene. Ira Yeager continues this tradition while carving a path inspired by his global travels in this piece titled, “Fox in Floral Garland.”



The painting, measuring 36” x 24” features a fox standing at attention against a clean white background. The fox, sharply depicted only in parts, faces the left edge of the canvas with its front legs resting atop a rock. Head held high from its perch, the fox extends its view into the distance, eyes alert and searching, but unthreatened by its surroundings. Around its neck is a striking floral garland, the loose marks

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which constitute its leaves flat against the crackling texture of the fox's amber coat.

At the fox's feet are a few fallen flowers, daffodils in white and yellow, and a pink and red rose that floats in space, each clearly rendered and resting grounded in blank space. Also at the fox's feet are two white mice; each unbothered by the presence of the predator perched above them, one sniffing the ground, the other gazing in the same direction as the fox. To the right of the fox's shoulder is an amber butterfly, which, despite being mid-flight, is pictured still and flat against the white backdrop.

The whole painting is centered around the concept of the gaze, most notably of the fox, who stands at attention in observation of an unseen subject. Whether that subject is friend, foe, or future meal is uncertain. Also

present is the gaze of the artist himself, who has flattened or removed the inessential, choosing instead to highlight the splendor of the natural, both in the painting's extended attention to the fox and through the placement of a wreath upon its shoulders. In doing so, Yeager elevates nature without insisting on its purity, instead choosing to enjoy the interplay of humans and nature, insisting that humanity is within nature rather than without.

This piece is reflective of the artist's interests present in paintings across his entire body of work. Yeager's work often investigates the concept that humanity is intertwined with nature, as made evident both in this series of wreathed animals, as well as in his landscape paintings. Breaking from previous generations of landscape artists, Yeager doesn't aim to depict a pure, untouched nature, but instead

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realizes a natural landscape that both births and bears the mark of human civilization. Typical as well, is his use of a flattened perspective, simple backgrounds, and bright colors.

Ira Yeager was born in 1938 in Bellingham, a small northern Washington beach town situated closer to Vancouver than Seattle. He took to painting from a young age and moved to San Francisco upon reaching adulthood, studying at the iconic San Francisco Arts Institute before furthering his studies in Florence, Italy. This desire to travel and experience varied landscapes took him to Tangier, Morocco where he lived for several years, becoming close friends with Beat movement writers including Alan Ginsberg, Gore Vidal, and Truman Capote, amongst others. This time in the Mediterranean was extended with a 10-year stint in Greece, where he developed his interest in crackling paint textures.

Finally, he returned with his husband to Calistoga, California where he exhibited widely in gallery shows and several worthy local museums.

Ira Yeager, “Fox in Floral Garland” will be offered as Lot 224 in Michaan’s November gallery auction on Friday, November 17th, which features notable names headlining the fashion, fine art, and jewelry departments. Three handbags, by Hermes and Louis Vuitton, lead a sale featuring works by Constantin Kluge, Jose Vela Zanegtti, and Keith Haring, while the jewelry department showcases an astonishing golden pocket watch and jewelry by Gioielmoda and Lunch at the Ritz.

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