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FAIR FOLKS & A GOAT PRESENTS “LEAF // CLOUD: Nature Tangible and Transcendent”
curated by Alicia Lubowski-Jahn

Fair Folks & a Goat proudly presents *Leaf // Cloud*, a group show curated by Alicia Lubowski-Jahn. This exhibition includes eco-conscious artworks by Trey Speegle and Dana Matthews together with Susan Benarcik, Liz Burow, Lilian Cooper, Clemens Kois, John Patrick, and Patrick Winfield. Participating designers Fernando and Humberto Campana, Kevin Cunningham, Emiliano Godoy, Stewart Webb, and Brooklyn-based designers Stéphane Hubert, Daniel Michalik, and Colleen and Eric Whiteley employ creative upcycling, recycleables, and renewable materials in innovative ways. An opening reception will take place at the gallery's New York space 7 East 88th Street #0006 on **June 1, 2011 from 5 to 8 PM.**

In celebration of the UN's World Environment Day (June 5) and this year's focus on “Forests: Nature at Your Service,” *Leaf // Cloud* presents a variety of approaches to sustainable and socially-responsible design as well as art that encourages environmental solutions.

The exhibition's title is inspired by the work of British aesthetic critic John Ruskin (1819–1900). In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin describes the “leaf” and “cloud” as a layer covering the world sphere: “Between the earth and man arose the **leaf**. Between the heaven and man came the **cloud**. His life being partly as the falling **leaf**, and partly as the flying vapour.” Ruskin describes how natural elements in our surroundings exist in these two states of being—concealing the luminous glory of the heavens above and the core of darkness in the depths below—and how human life is a part of both. Ruskin's text draws attention to a layered landscape of apparent and disregarded nature, as seen in this contemporary selection of art and design that highlights natural habitats as well as innovative organic and earth-friendly materials and techniques. The works of the selected artists and designers give new meaning to “environmental awareness.”

The historical reference to Ruskin also underscores the relationship between the contemporary artworks on display and nineteenth-century art historical traditions as well as pre-industrial dying and photographic printing techniques. Dana Matthews' documentation of organic farming in Delaware County, in New York's Catskill Mountains, suggests the pastoral idyll of French Barbizon landscape painting. Her impressions of plants in the chemical-free cyanotype process recall the work of English botanist and photographer Anna Atkins (1799–1871), who made some of the earliest and most

beautiful cyanotypes of plant specimens. John Patrick, founder of the sustainable fashion label John Patrick Organic, created an indigo painting, which is part of his wider exploration of historical natural and handmade pigments including honey, cochineal, and china ink.

Ruskin's "leaf" suggests elements of nature that are visible while "cloud" implies those that are less so. The exhibition beckons viewers to consider this juxtaposition. Trey Speegle's compositions reveal a human portrait concealed by the landscape. Indeed, Speegle's heedlessness of paint-by-number instructions and use of probabilistic and dualistic phrases evoke human choices. Although ostensibly belonging to the landscape genre, his landscapes can just as well be classified as a mode of human portraiture. Playing with what remains of a vanishing landscape, Lilian Cooper records the precarious physical edges of the North Atlantic coastal region. She economically renders the shoreline's disappearance and erosion through a meager trace of sand in her *Spiggies* painting series. In another vein, Dana Matthews' photographs of flowers and trees identify the natural world's transcendent layer that exists just below the surface. Her photographs explore nature's spiritual or energetic essences and roots. Coaxing us to recognize and connect with the absent, the hidden, the estranged, the otherworldly, and the intangible, the nature imagery in *Leaf // Cloud* enhances viewers' attentiveness to our natural surroundings.

Alicia Lubowski-Jahn holds a Ph.D. in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her expertise in landscape art is grounded in her doctoral dissertation, "The Picture of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt and the Tropical American Landscape," which explores how a scientist's ecological view of nature found visual expression and aesthetic analogy in the landscape genre. She has written about contemporary eco art and sustainable design for online media since 2008.

Named one of the top ten indie shopping destinations on the Upper East Side by *Time Out New York* and featured as a must-see design emporium by *Details*, Fair Folks & a Goat encourages visitors to linger and get to know the fine art and design objects in an intimate way. From the art on the wall to the furniture, objects, and even fashion in the closet, every item is carefully considered. In this salon setting, artists have a unique platform to introduce their work and ideas to the public. More information about Fair Folks can be found at www.fairfolksandagoat.com.

Fair Folks & a Goat is open by appointment. To attend the opening reception or to schedule an appointment, email rsvp@fairfolksandagoat.com or call 646-596-8354.

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Images available upon request. Please schedule an appointment to visit the space and learn more.