

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2016

Inman Gallery is pleased to present
the exhibitions:

**Kristin Musgnug: *Low Down
and Close Up: Paintings of the
Forest Floor***

and in the south gallery

Gene Owens: *Spring*

May 20, 2016 – July 1, 2016

Opening Reception:
Friday, May 20th
6 – 8 pm

Gallery hours:
Wed. – Sat., 11 – 6 and by appointment



Kristin Musgnug, ***Big Stump***, 2016
oil on canvas over panel, 60 x 40 inches

Inman Gallery is pleased to present a selection of new paintings and works on paper by **Kristin Musgnug** entitled ***Low Down and Close Up: Paintings of the Forest Floor*** in the Main Gallery. In the South Gallery, ***Spring***, an exhibition of new sculptures by **Gene Owens** will be on view. This will be Owens' first solo show with Inman. Both shows will open Friday, May 20th, with a reception from 6 to 8, and continue through July 1st.

In the popular imagination, the forest is often little more than a setting: a site of savagery or renewal, a backdrop on which to project our fears and ideals. In **Kristin Musgnug's** paintings, the scenery is foreground. Her canvases don't depict orderly spaces, waiting to be populated or conscripted into some larger narrative. Instead, stumps and embankments jut high into our field of vision, obstructing the space beyond with otherwise inconspicuous grace notes: a backlit spray of maple leaves; a cascade of tangled roots; a patchwork of lichen on tree bark. The paintings abound with activity — snowmelt trickles, felled trees molder — but they are too concerned with immediate particularities to linger on sweeping vistas or make any grand gestures.

This isn't to say that Musgnug's paintings are purely literal documents, without invention or inflection. But she builds from close observation, from the challenges and discoveries of actually being there, rather than from detached speculation. Musgnug roams the woods at length looking for the right spot. When she finds it, she makes drawings on site, works up color studies, and takes photographs. She combines and supplements her notes back in her studio, and the resulting paintings blend careful attention with imaginative elaboration. Her colors, convincingly specific, are also slightly heightened. The stump in *Big Stump* glows ember-red in its crannies; the snow bank in *Forest Floor with Melting Snow* carries a sharp blue luster in its shadows. Her angles, too, are often gently amplified. Mossy rocks and weathered branches lurch forward as the forest floor seems to swing just a little high.

When nature is at its most imposing, when it's freighted with our heaviest tropes, it can unexpectedly start to fade: it recedes from real, idiosyncratic corporeality into memory and metaphor. Kristin Musgnug's paintings, tenaciously particular, persistently curious, hold their ground against that blanching tendency, and pulse with the vitality of lived experience.

In contrast to Musgnug's work, **Gene Owens'** veneration of the natural world is less a description and more an embodiment. His sculptures lean towards abstraction, and where the subject is identifiable, it often implies a human presence. His cast-bronze chairs, for instance, are to some extent defined by their relationship to the body. But the rational, functional geometries of those objects are destabilized by their construction. Their legs, seats and backs are represented as florid branches and vines: bristling with shoots, heavy with berries, and entirely unsuited for sitting. Owens pushes this transformation still further by encouraging chance and natural processes to intervene. He dips his wax models (from which the bronze chairs are cast) into alternately hot and cool vats of wax. The hot wax erodes the original structures; the cooling wax gloms on. The finished sculptures, cast and surfaced, are a compromise between human intentions and the more turbulent order of the world.



Gene Owens, **Vine Chair with Fruit**, 2015
cast bronze and powder coating, unique, 17 x 12 x 12 inches

In another body of work, Owens imagines himself inside his forms. Rather than harnessing a force of nature, Owens essentially becomes one, tracing his surfaces until he senses a weak spot, some anomaly that might suggest a new limb or protuberance. Owens proceeds with the impulsive logic of an animating spirit, augmenting his sculptures where they seem to need it, and coaxing them from germination through to maturity.

This will be Owens' first exhibition of new work in more than twenty years, and if the late efflorescence suggests anything, it's that his process is a true collaboration with nature. The impetus to create can lie dormant for any number of reasons: unfavorable environment, change of circumstance, or just a seasonal cycle. It can be fickle and unpredictable. But once it takes root, it's irrepressible.

Kristin Musgnug (born 1959, Buffalo, NY) received a BA in Art History from Williams College, MA, in 1981, and an MFA in Painting from Indiana University in 1988. From 1988 to 1990 she was an Artist in Residence at the Glassell School's Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Solo exhibitions include the Marko Cepenkov Center of Culture in Prilep, Macedonia (1996); *Uses of Nature*, Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, TX (1998); Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS (1999); *Un-Natural Histories: Paintings of Invasive Species*, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR (2010); and the North Cascades Institute Environmental Learning Center, Diablo Lake, WA (2015). Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, TX. Musgnug lives in Fayetteville, AR, where she is Professor of Painting at the University of Arkansas.

Gene Owens (born 1931, Birdville, TX) received a BA from Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth, and an MFA from the University of Georgia in Athens. He has had solo exhibitions at the University of Georgia, Athens (1961); Fifth Avenue Gallery, Fort Worth (1961); Fort Worth Art Center (1964); Gallery in the Square, Fort Worth (1967); The New Gallery, Fort Worth (1980); and *Retrospective: Gene Owens*, Moudy Gallery, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX (1991). In 2012, The Old Jail Art Center in Albany, TX, organized a second retrospective exhibition of his work. His work is in the collection of the Old Jail Art Center, Albany, TX; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; and the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX. Owens lives and works in Cleburne, TX.

For more information please contact the gallery at 713-526-7800 or info@inmangallery.com