

ARTFORUM



Chrysanne Stathacos

SITUATIONS

127 Henry St

October 20 - November 25

Cannabis is in the air, from an October issue of *Bloomberg Businessweek* (with a cover that reads “Pot of Gold? ELEVATE YOUR PORTFOLIO!”) to Canada’s recent legalization of the substance. Chrysanne

Stathacos’s ivy and marijuana paintings, made in 1990 and now on view here, champion the healing properties of the plant *avant la lettre*, anticipating today’s global decriminalization and legalization movement.

Exhibited for the first time, the artist’s canvases bring to mind the work of Joan Mitchell and Pat Steir with their verticality and abstract botanical forms. Stathacos uses a range of techniques—etching press, silk screen, and the direct printing of leaves, roses, and hair—to build layered surfaces. These processes coalesce in *Potted Passion #2*, where directly printed images of marijuana leaves, in black and white, hover over patches of ivy (an evergreen that symbolizes eternity and the strength of friendship) rendered in blue. At the edges of the canvas, the white marijuana leaves take on a spectral character, as they almost disappear into the work’s pale ground. The late artist and activist Jorge Zontal, a member of the queer art collective General Idea, provided Stathacos with the cannabis plants, which he grew in his garden apartment (Zontal died in 1994 from AIDS-related complications). Stathacos’s works, produced during a time of indelible loss, are not only diaristic but funerary.

Mysticism and spirituality have long informed Stathacos’s practice, and her shadowy, elemental depictions of nature in reds, golds, silvers, blacks, and whites lend themselves to a shamanistic reading. In these canvases, altered consciousness becomes a mode of witness and remembrance.

— Sophie Kovel