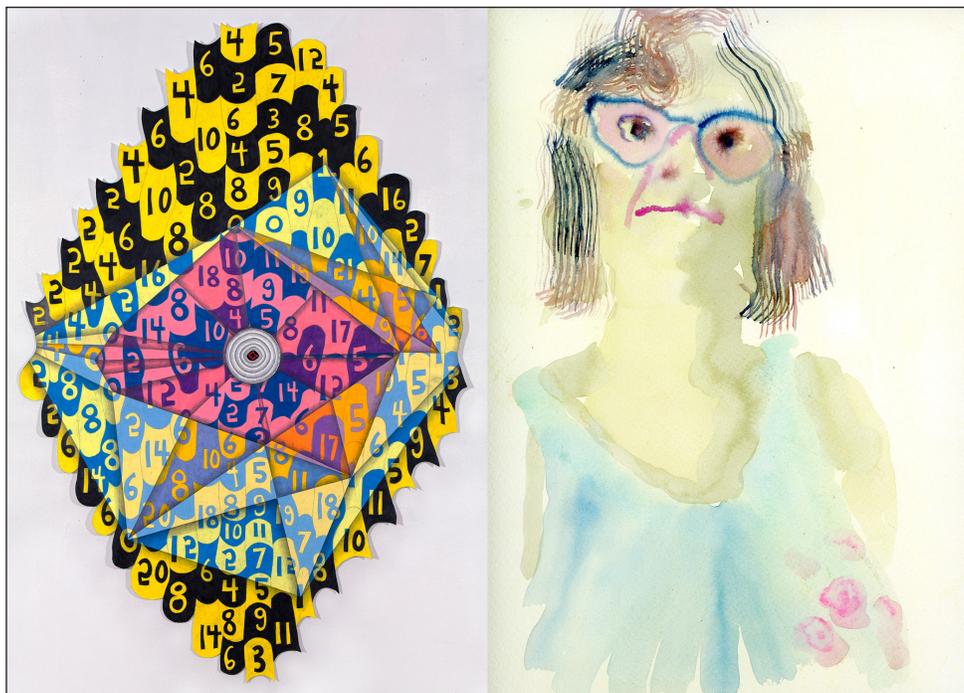


Planthouse

Stigmergy & Massive Expanding Soap: Marion Wilson and John O'Connor

January 20–February 18, 2023

Opening Reception: Friday, January 20, 6-8PM



Planthouse is pleased to present ***Stigmergy & Massive Expanding Soap***, a collaborative exhibition featuring works on paper by Marion Wilson and John O'Connor.

The odd collaboration (a post covid new form?) between Marion Wilson and John O'Connor began with a common interest in dysmorphic portraiture. Parallels emerged from there: both artists impose rules on their practices to tap into the strangeness of everyday; both work on paper because of its basic and malleable nature; both embrace the humor of aimlessness; both share a love of vibrant color and jittery visual pattern; both make iterations of the same subject (although Wilson leans towards figuration and O'Connor abstraction).

Wilson and O'Connor are driven to locate the moments of transformation, growth, and decay that underlie our relationships with ourselves, each other, and our environments. Their artworks render these moments visible—be they sad, funny, banal, or transcendent. This whole transformative system is akin to stigmergy, a mechanism of indirect self-organization found in nature. For Wilson and O'Connor, this principle is a more ubiquitous force that shapes our beliefs and habits. They look for evidence of its existence across poetry, science, mathematics, data, games, the human form, disease, plant life, language, elements, comedy, colors, and patterns.

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Although the mechanism of stigmergy also excellently captures how Wilson and O'Connor worked collaboratively in the making of this exhibition, the word alone is too rigid to fully represent the whimsical nature of this show. Thus, when Wilson suggested a kid's science experiment called *Massive Expanding Soap*, it felt like the perfect name to portray the childlike and experimental sense of play within the pieces. Both enigmatic and absurd, playful and real, *Stigmergy and Massive Expanding Soap* combines the literal and scientific with artistic exploration.

John O'Connor lives and works in the greater New York City area. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art. He is represented in New York by Pierogi Gallery and will have a solo exhibition there in the fall of 2023, accompanied by a catalog with an essay by Philip Glahn. O'Connor is also a member of the art and technology collective NonCoreProjector.

Marion Wilson holds a B.A. Wesleyan University, an M.A. from Columbia University, and an M.F.A. from University of Cincinnati. She's a recipient of national grants including NEA Artworks Grant with WPU Galleries, ARTPLACE with McColl Center, and Mural Arts Project/ Restored Spaces. Wilson's work has been shown with Frederieke Taylor, Cheryl Pelavin, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, along with also being published in *Hyperallergic*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Art in America*, *Time Out* and *NYT*, among others. While an Associate Professor at Syracuse University Wilson also spearheaded several public art and architecture projects including MLAB; MossLab, 601 Tully; and currently, in 2022, 100 Lagoon Pond—a floating houseboat/studio and public platform on Martha's Vineyard. Wilson currently teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

The gallery will host a conversation with the artists moderated by critic Louis Bury on Thursday, February 16, at 6:30 pm.

Louis Bury is the author of *Exercises in Criticism* (2015) and *The Way Things Go* (forthcoming, 2023), Associate Professor of English at Hostos Community College, CUNY, and a regular contributor to *Hyperallergic*, *BOMB*, and *Art in America*.

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