# *Garden Variety* Mia Brownell

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December 4, 2022 – January 21, 2023

#### **MAPSpace**

6 north pearl street, port chester, ny 10573

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I make still life paintings that are not "still." They dissect and interweave fundamental elements of nature, food, and culture of movement, and impulse - that might be labeled theatric. My inspirations stem from the confluences between the seductive excesses of food culture, the vanity and illusionism of traditional still life painting, and the constructed spaces of computergenerated scientific imaging. I imagine the entanglement between the consumerist idealization of food with its biological engineering and the molecular strains that then interact with our bodies. The space of the paintings attempts to capture this paradoxical perspective, one that is equally rational and fantastical, material and in constant flux. If we are what we eat, what are we becoming? These entanglements reveal a new nature of food and the cultures that adopt or are dependent on it. Food has become a dynamic field for exploration and manipulation; we are made both vulnerable and powerful in its wake.

Special thanks to MAPSpace, Arts Westchester, New York State Council on the Arts, and Southern Connecticut State University.

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## Garden Variety

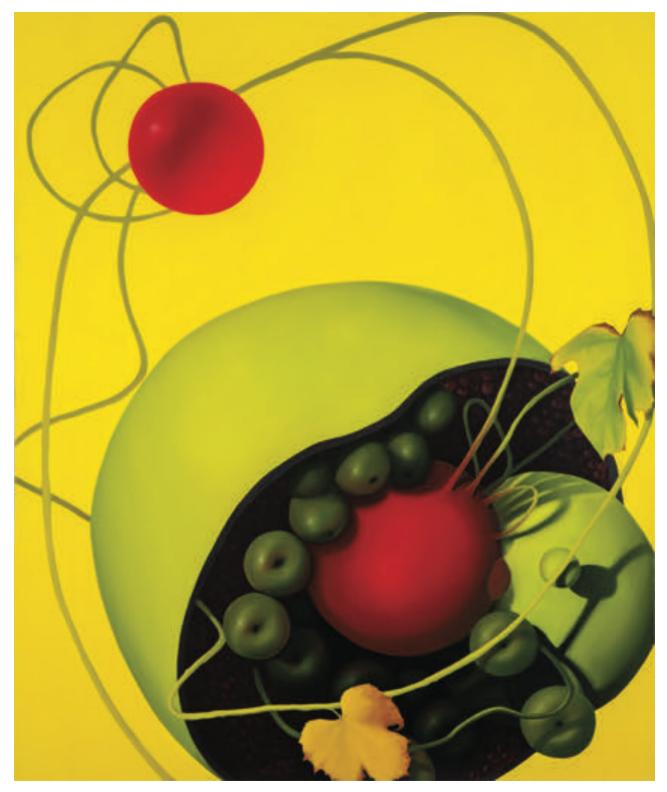
Garden-variety: of the usual or ordinary type; commonplace.

The past few years have seen a global pandemic and significant, on-going, political and environmental turmoil. These paintings reflect a longing for the ordinary with an understanding that ordinary may never have existed in the first place.

My work focuses on the seemingly ordinary subject of food, as depicted in traditional still-life painting. These paintings examine cultural values, both shifting and static. Primary questions about food, from how it is grown, processed, marketed, and consumed to how it functions as a signifier in society, are alluded to in these complex and intertwining images. If we are what we eat, then we can look to our food, how it is processed, manipulated, and prepared for consumption, for revelations about ourselves and what we may become. Like the microbiology embedded in our food, I see parallels to the social constructs that create, or attempt to define, who we are.



*Still Life with Garden Variety (Autumn Sun), 2022* Oil on canvas, 70x56 inches



*Still Life with Sustainability, 2022* Oil on canvas, 36x30 inches



*Still Life with Garden Variety (Home Depot Orchid), 2022* Oil on canvas, 10x12 inches



*Still Life with Sympathy for Eve, 2007* Oil on canvas, 64x54 inches



*Still Life with Drop, 2013* Oil on canvas, 36x36 inches



*Still Life with Villin Headpiece IV, 2010* Oil on canvas, 42x56 inches

### Leda and the Swan

Leda and the Swan is a story from Greek mythology in which the god Zeus, in the form of a swan, rapes Leda, wife to the king of Sparta. The story generated a significant number of paintings, sculptures, and other artworks throughout antiquity with depictions focusing on a recumbent Leda with copulatory swan. It appears that the postcoitus rest was what captured the imagination of most of the artists. Examining this story today is meaningful in the light of the recent US Supreme Court ruling to repeal women's reproductive rights and, like Leda, establish a woman's body as a repository, her consent notwithstanding.

In my Leda and the Swan series, Leda is present but she is not overtly depicted. What drives these works is the imagined aftermath or role reversal of the copulation, rather than the appearance or purpose of her body. Two paintings in the series depict Zeus, in the form of a swan, dead and undergoing various stages of a meal preparation; Leda is the implied chef in these pieces. Another painting of blood-stained sheets suggests multiple narratives including abortion (of the fowl fetus), slaughter, rape, or menstruation.



*Still Life with Leda and the Swan, 2020* Oil on canvas, 26x31 inches



*Still Life with Leda and the Swan II, 2021* Oil on canvas, 20x24 inches



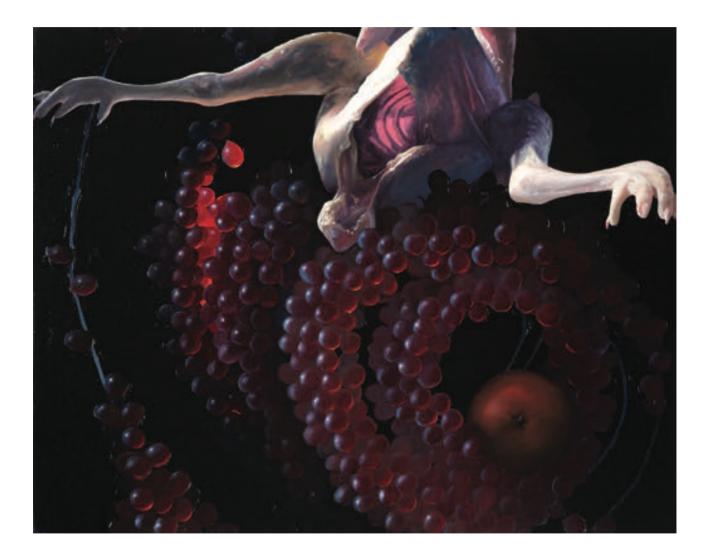
*Still Life with Leda and the Swan III, 2022* Oil on canvas, 12x10 inches



*Still Life with Cock (Lucian Freud), 2007* Oil on canvas, 16x20 inches



*Still Life with Cock (John Currin), 2007* Oil on canvas, 16x20 inches



*Still Life with Cock (Philip Pearlstein), 2008* Oil on canvas, 16x20 inches Mia Brownell is a New York based artist whose paintings use the illusionistic conventions of traditional food still-life painting, simultaneously referencing 17th century Dutch realism and the coiling configurations of scientific molecular imaging. The culture, science, and environmental issues surrounding the global industrial food complex often inspire Brownell's sci-fi still life paintings.

Brownell has received numerous awards and honors, including New York Foundation for the Arts (SOS); New York State Council on the Arts (ArtsWestchester Artist Grant); US Department of State (Art in Embassies); Public Art Commissions (University of Connecticut Health Center and the city of Geneva, NY); and Connecticut State University Research Grants. Past residencies include Millay Colony and the American Academy of Rome.

Previous solo exhibitions include Sloan Fine Art (New York, NY); J. Cacciola Gallery (New York, NY); Judy Ann Goldman Fine Art (Boston, MA); Metaphor Contemporary Art (Brooklyn, NY); Goodwin Fine Art (Denver, CO); Big Orbit Gallery (Buffalo, NY); Real Art Ways (Hartford, CT); and the National Academy of Sciences (Washington, DC).

Past museum and university solo shows include Fulginiti Pavilion for Bioethics and Humanities (Denver, CO); Lemmerman Gallery (Jersey City, NJ); Hunterdon Art Museum (Clinton, NJ); Housatonic Museum of Art (Bridgeport, CT); Union Brown Gallery (Duke University, Durham, NC); and the Castellani Art Museum (Niagara Falls, NY).

Brownell has artworks in the permanent collections of the Addison Gallery of American Art (Andover, MA); Fidelity Investments (Boston, MA); Housatonic Museum of Art (Bridgeport, CT); Hunterdon Art Museum (Clinton, NJ); Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury, CT); University of Connecticut (Farmington, CT); Wellington Management (Boston, MA); and the National Academy of Sciences (Washington, DC).

Brownell's work has been cited in numerous publications, including The New York Times, The Village Voice, Boston Globe, Artnet Magazine, and Hi-Fructose.

#### Special Thanks to:



#### MAPSpace

an artist-owned and artist-driven space for curatorial exploration, exhibition, collaboration, and the gathering of ideas across discipline, philosophy, and art form.

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