

HYPERALLERGIC

An Artist Captures Life's Relentless Too-Muchness

David Kennedy Cutler captures a time in which image has fully metastasized into reality — a mediated world where everything is always on and calling for you.



Lisa Yin Zhang



David Kennedy Cutler, "Snake I" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature (photo Lisa Yin Zhang/Hyperallergic)

I once rummaged through a somewhat obscure cupboard in my apartment and discovered what used to be a bag of potatoes. Those neglected tubers had wrestled tender fuschia shoots through their mesh container, searching for a nutrient source. I felt like a monster. They wanted so badly

and had worked so hard to live, and I hadn't thought about them for a millisecond. There was too much to deal with, always too much.

David Kennedy Cutler's exhibition *Second Nature* is about the too-muchness of our world: how we live in an era wherein each thing is not just itself but simultaneously how we see it, how it feels, what we think of it, how it photographs, how it used to look, what it might become, what others think of it, and more. It's a time in which image has fully metastasized into reality — a mediated world where everything is always on and calling for you. Cutler's inkjet transfer and acrylic works, poised mid-transformation from painting into sculpture, capture everyday objects from this disorientingly kaleidoscopic perspective. These works paradoxically point to their own impossibility, like the [return of the repressed](#), suggesting that struggling to keep oneself together before such a lacerating inundation of images, news, and information is fundamentally unsustainable.



David Kennedy Cutler, "Snake I" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)

Cutler excavates from his canvases more layers than they should contain. In "Snake I" (2025), depicting a snake plant, for instance, there's the standard surface in which paint creates the illusion of depth. But then there's blank canvas both behind and "in front of" the subject in the form of ripped-off slices of the plant pot; a light pastel-gray layer of shadow that subtly suggests that we're looking into a non-Euclidean space; and cut-out pieces of canvas that reveal a layer of

inkjet transfer and paint underneath and create yet another visual level via painted undersides that snake upward past the bounds of the canvas. This activates the wall behind the painting as *yet* another layer in the form of a shadow. *Phew.*

As that description suggests, these works are almost impossible to make sense of. Trying to follow the line of a leaf feels like losing one's place in a line of text or train of thought: You backtrack, try again, lose it again. It feels like peering into a world with more advanced physics than yours, like your vision is splintering, your mind stuttering. If Cubism breaks up objects to reassemble them from multiple perspectives, we might call Cutler's project a form of hypercubism, to borrow a term from mathematics — a Cubism for the 21st century.



David Kennedy Cutler, "Stoppage" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)

"Stoppage" (2025), for instance, suggests to me a stool falling while dramatically tossing up a vase that presumably sat upon it, scattering its flowers. Wooden stool legs and plant stalks chaotically interlace and even appear to become one another. Different temporalities are caked together: The stool seems to spin as it falls, and the flowers range from tight buds to full bloom.

Plants, flowers, and yes, potatoes find their way into many works in this show. But rather than explicit ecocriticism, Cutler's invocation of nature feels more like a gesture toward this feeling of bursting too-muchness via living things, which are closer to us — I definitely felt worse for the straining potatoes, for instance, than the equally abandoned bag that contained them. Indeed, I'd

go so far as to suggest that works like “Fiction” (2025) — in which lavender tulips both burst upward and sag downward from a bag containing a multi-headed wine bottle — are almost gory. From one side, the bag is unzipped to reveal a wooden armature that recalls an exposed spine; it seems to be from this dead matter that those flowers blossom.

These works are inherently anxious, but “Bed” (2022) might make that dread most manifest. In it, surplus pieces of a metal bed frame pierce through the mattress, seeming to shoot out the orange bedspread’s decorative suns; these coronas float aimlessly around like dust mites, haunting your place of rest like a loose id, like shattered pieces of your restless mind. How do we live like this? The center, Cutler seems to suggest, cannot hold.



David Kennedy Cutler, “Bed” (2022), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)



David Kennedy Cutler, "Meteorite II" (2024), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)



Two views of David Kennedy Cutler, "Pillow" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire, wood, zippers (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)



David Kennedy Cutler, "Ensemble III" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)



David Kennedy Cutler, "Goodbye Flowers" (2025), inkjet transfer, acrylic and clear coat on canvas, armature wire (photo by Adam Reich, courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York)