

photograph

Review: Carson Fisk-Vittori, Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago

By Jason Foumberg
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The gallery smells of the feminine hygiene products—Raspberry Rain shave gel and Japanese Cherry Blossom body spray—that are integral units in Carson Fisk-Vittori's photo-and-sculpture assemblages, on view at Carrie Secrist Gallery through January 4.

The saccharine scents are manufactured to signify cleanliness, and the artist coolly critiques the triumph of ersatz natural experiences. Fisk-Vittori's artworks in *Women Weed & Weather* parody store product-displays and commercial advertising imagery to illustrate the extinction of the nature-culture divide.

The artist emerged several years ago with real-life still-lives (as sculpture) that included houseplants adorned with inappropriate objects, such as thumbtacks. Now, her botanical interventions function as stage design for a new photo-based project. Fisk-Vittori's photographs of urban nature, as spotted around Oakland, are supported (sometimes literally, as in *Windshield Display*) by bottled nature. In a twist on nature photography, the artist focuses her camera on instances where nature is a nuisance, such as weeds, and human attempts to beautify nature, such as gardening.



Fisk-Vittori happily confuses the motives of commercial and art photography. In *Nature Window*, a smart phone seemingly sprouts from a plant. As an instance of product placement, it's unclear which is the more desirable commodity: the phone or the plant. This puzzle is further complicated by *Nature Window's* display upon an emerald green

painted wall—the same green of the photo’s background and of green-screen technology, which productively substitutes the realistic for the real.

The artist’s images and objects have a second life beyond the gallery. An intentional consequence of the artist’s packaging of her photos—the prints are sandwiched between Plexiglas and aluminum—and integrated with readymade objects, is that the exhibition documentation, when viewed online, convincingly masquerades as a type of stock-photo collage that is now proliferating on Internet visual culture websites like Tumblr, in which the artist readily participates. The “weeds,” as referenced in the show, symbolize absurdist viral trends, and viewers are merely shoppers browsing for the truest distortion of aesthetic experience they can find.

