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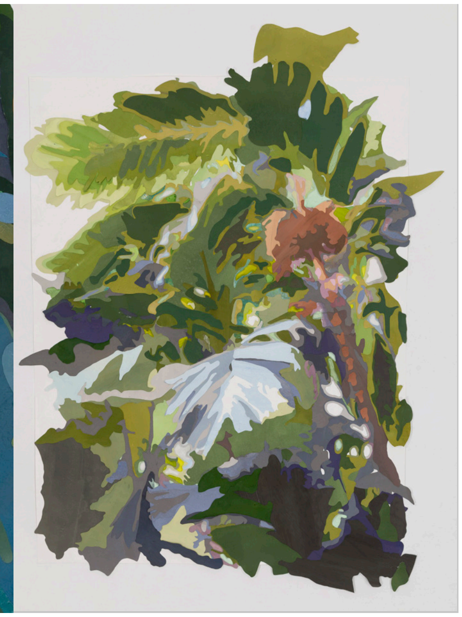

Naomi Reis
Paradise Constructed

September 10 – October 10, 2015
Opening: Thursday, September 10, 6-8pm

Mixed Greens is thrilled to present *Paradise Constructed*, a solo exhibition by Naomi Reis. Through mixed-media paintings and installations, Reis continues her investigation of idealized spaces—which has spanned the utopian architecture of modernism, vertical gardens, and geodesics—to focus on the manmade environments found in botanical conservatories.

Paradise Constructed begins with the premise that we all need a version of paradise, real or imagined, to sustain us. Paradise as a concept has existed for millennia, from the Persian walled gardens of the word's origins, to Pure Land Buddhism and Eden, to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. With our current anxiety over environmental destruction and apocalypse-as-entertainment spilling from movie theaters, our idea of paradise is shifting from the colonial ideal of a real place waiting to be discovered and conquered, to something our civilization is tasked with rebuilding.

Using mylar and paper cutouts, paint, and custom-printed fabric, Reis's vignettes offer a contemporary take on landscape painting. Moving away from an idealized Arcadia, nature is instead represented by urban tropics, the nearest manifestation of paradise available to inhabitants of cities (where 70% of the world's population is projected to live by 2050). In a dialogue between three-dimensional space and its representation, Reis translates photographs of these places into paintings through a labor-intensive process that makes visible—through the build-up of layered cutouts—topographical contours that slowly resolve into an image. The resulting compositions hover between abstraction and representation, painting and collage, flatness and three-dimensionality.

Reis's process results in a hybrid visual language that reflects her experience growing up between two cultures (Japan/US). It incorporates codes from both, without directly following the lineage of either—combining paper and pigment washes from a Japanese sense of materiality, with an eye versed in the language of Western painting. Central to the work are questions of identity, authenticity, and spirit of place. It suggests that our relationship with nature—and our definitions of "natural" and "artificial," "native" and "alien"—will continue to evolve as our landscapes are increasingly manufactured and our geographic borders more blurred. A new era of a paradise lost calls for new metaphors; paradise is not something that we inherit, but something we are called upon to construct.

Naomi Reis was born in Shiga, Japan, and lives in Brooklyn, NY. A founding member of the artist-run gallery TSA New York, Reis has participated in several residencies including Yaddo, Jentel, Wave Hill, the Lower East Side Printshop, and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop. Solo exhibitions include the Horticultural Society of New York (2013) and TSA New York (2013); group exhibitions include the Museum of Biblical Art, Susan Inglett gallery, Field Projects, Kunsthalle Galapagos, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Reis received her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania and a BA in Transcultural Identity from Hamilton College.