

# emily blom —

*wallflowers*



---

*“Unheeded flew the hours,  
How noiseless falls the foot of Time,  
That only treads on flowers.”*  
William Robert Spencer.

new  
works

03.09.21 —  
20.09.21

Emily Blom’s exhibition uses the language of Victorian flower dictionaries to explore the sentimental and fragile nature of memory, youth, and beauty.

The symbolic significance of flowers is entwined with the human experience. Their ongoing presence in our most ancient rituals and traditions reaches across almost every culture, spawning a range of allegorical meanings and associations. Today, flowers are synonymous with femininity, youth, and beauty. Yet they are also a timely reminder of the fleeting nature of such things and, indeed, of life itself.

Wallflowers primarily takes inspiration from the Victorian Flower Dictionaries of the early 1800’s, in which flower symbolism became particularly elaborate. Within these miscellanies, individual flower species were catalogued alongside historic and symbolic definitions taken from literature, mythology, religion, and medieval legend. Many of these associations remain well known today; the rose is still commonly used to represent love, and the white lily frequently acts as a symbol of purity and rebirth. The Victorian art of floriography, as it is known, was used to convey cryptic messages, expressed with the careful choice and placement of various blooms within posies and bouquets.

# emily blom —

*wallflowers*



The exhibition draws on this floral lexicon, as well as a range of well-known allegorical tropes for beauty and innocence, to create images that embrace symbolism and hidden meanings. Loaded in sentimentality, the paintings are a homage to the vintage, hand-coloured postcards that were prolific in the Victorian era. The figures are reminiscent of tinted black and white photographs, with exaggerated rosy cheeks and budding pink lips. These beauties are adorned in pearls, gold, ribbons, and lace, with everything external to the figure elaborate and heightened. Skies are impossibly blue, clothing is embellished with pattern and drenched in colour. Decadent flowers are presented in full bloom, at the very peak of their glory.

The work utilises a pastiche of painting, printmaking and graffiti techniques to create layered paintings that are rich in colour, pattern, and texture. Drawing inspiration from a range of sources, including personal photographs and images in mass media, the work is not intended to represent the individual, but a glorified and fictionalised version of the past. Each painting is a constructed tableau, that shows youth and beauty through the myopic, idealized lens of memory. The demure figures have been transformed into vintage tchotchkes, preserved as pretty tokens of remembrance. Keepsakes to be adored and admired just like the flowers they hold.

These odes to femininity are beautiful as a memory, ever more lovely once they are gone.

## new works

03.09.21 —  
20.09.21