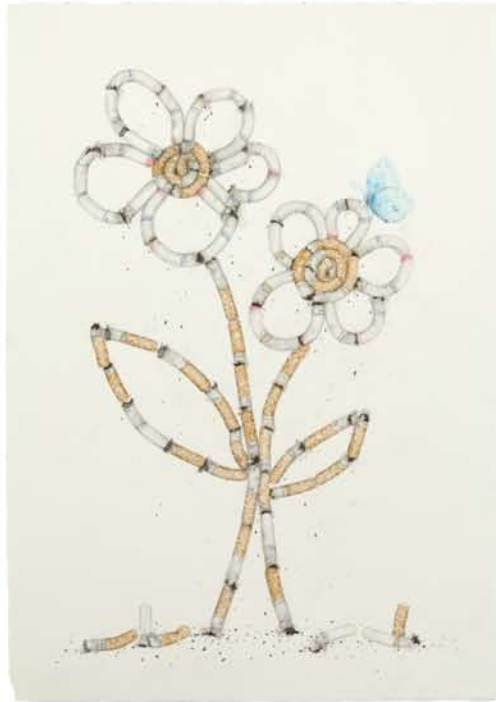


## FLOWERS FOR AUREL SCHMIDT



CRAP FLOWERS, 2010

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND THE FIREPLACE PROJECT

The Hamptons—Manhattans seasonal sixth borough, and the one where you can leave your doors unlocked—might seem an improbable setting for New York artist **Aurel Schmidt**, whose excruciatingly detailed drawings typically involve figures saturated with maggots, condoms and general detritus. Her contribution to the 2010 Whitney Biennial was a life-size pencil drawing of the Minotaur with a Blackberry, a pastel pink penis, and a walking stick made up of hyper-real Budweiser cans. For a supplement book to the last issue of *Purple*, the artist parodied her signature, fetishistic look—bleach-blonde hair and oversized glasses—along with her work's themes of self-revelation and intimacy in her work, with a sequence of amateur photographs of herself and her peers naked and behaving, if not badly, then gratuitously. "No one can really talk shit about me because I already put my own pussy in my own book," is what she said in the way of explanation (the supplement was in fact called "Pussy.")

It's not so much the abjection that defines the work as it is incipient sweetness. This aspect also gives Schmidt pause. In preparation for "Summer Bummer," her first solo show in nearly two years, opening this weekend at East Hampton gallery The Fireplace Project, Schmidt took self-imposed exile in her hometown, Kamloops, in the westernmost part of Canada. There, she narrowed her subject matter to flowers, butterflies, and soda cans, which she studied for the days it requires to render her labor-intensive work. "You aren't going to produce your magnum opus in August," says Schmidt, referring to the age-old tradition of showing any-old artwork during this summer. "So I wanted to

resist the impulse to over-think, and just have the show be about lightness."

*Crap Flowers* (all work, 2010) is a simple outline of flowers, made of cigarettes, which fall to the floor with stunning trompe l'oeil depth and detail. *Diet Coke* simply features a rose wilting, with the titular object as its vase.

But the drawings sneak up on you, because they are so plaintive and so memorable, and so sophisticated. And Schmidt's process speaks volumes: "When you say you want to go live with your mother, that's when you're at the breaking point. It was a week-and-a-half of total stress, and I never did get in touch with nature."

SUMMER BUMMER OPENS AUGUST 21, 7 PM. THE FIREPLACE PROJECT IS LOCATED AT 851 SPRINGS FIREPLACE ROAD, EAST HAMPTON, NY.

