

# G L A D S T O N E

David Pagel, "Review: Take a walk through the imaginary garden of Anna Zemánková," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 2017

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## Review: Take a walk through the imaginary garden of Anna Zemánková

**By David Pagel**

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Many see flowers as the most beautiful things on the planet, but they were not beautiful enough for Anna Zemánková (1908-1986), who spent the latter half of her life in the Czech city of Prague designing blooms more gorgeous than the real thing. They're on display through July 9 at the Good Luck Gallery in Chinatown in an exhibition that's not to be missed.

Zemánková's flowers look like they come from another planet — one much lusher and more luxurious than our own. Their colors blaze with intensity. Their silhouettes are sexy, the right mix of curvaceous grace and angled muscularity.

Their forms are extraordinary: No two resemble each other, and many seem to have as much in common with bumble bees, coral reefs and spaceships — as well as jellyfish, can-can dancers and neural networks — as they do with plant life. A tinge of menace emanates from the best ones, their spiky protuberances, wiggly tendrils and starburst-style blossoms evoking sci-fi weaponry and ear-splitting explosions.

The two-dozen dazzlers in Zemánková's first exhibition in California fall into three groups. The first are the most restrained: 11 pastel and ink drawings that could be close-ups of exotic plants but are too fanciful for that.

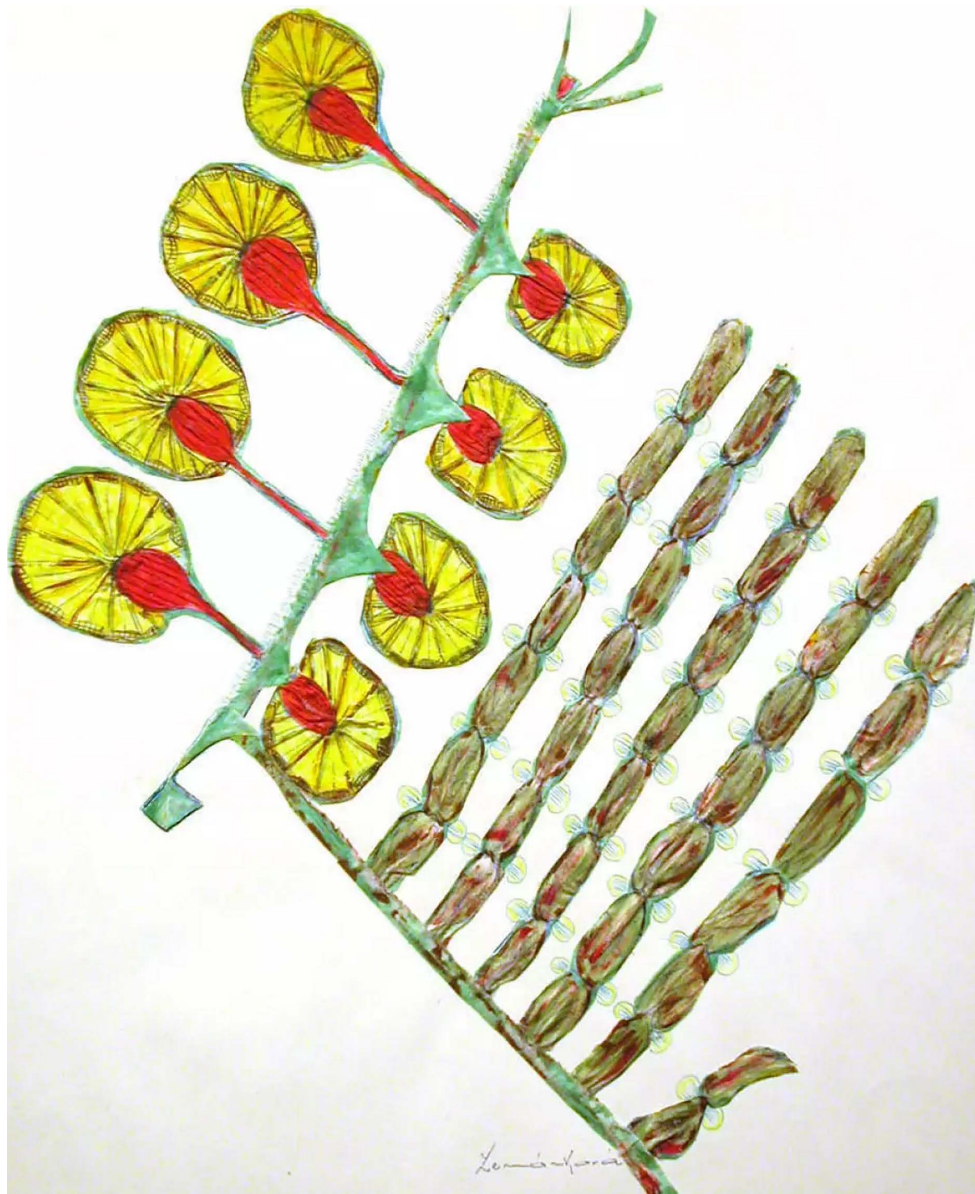
The second group leaves Realism behind for no-holds-barred artifice. In these four works on paper, the biggest of which measure 3 feet by 2 feet, Zemánková has added embroidery to her repertoire, enhancing her plants with greater mass and tactility. Rhinestones and beads add to the fun, dressing her petals, stems and leaves in costumes that should seem outlandish but aren't.



Anna Zemankova, "Untitled," 1970s, painted satin and ink on paper, 16.5 inches by 11.5 inches. (Good Luck Gallery) (Good Luck Gallery)

The third group is the strangest. To make nine pieces, Zemánková painted exquisitely detailed flowering plants on swathes of satin. She then cut out the fragile forms, many of which are made up of lacy networks not much wider than a few strands of hair. Finally, she glued the satin cutouts to small sheets of paper, adding ink flourishes to dress them up further. The combination of delicate drawn lines and unraveling threads of satin is exquisite.

In an age overrun by hyperbole, it seems preposterous to call pictures of flowers sublime. But Zemankova's are.



Anna Zemankova, "Untitled," 1970-80, painted satin, ink, collage on paper, 24.5 inches by 17.75 inches. (Good Luck Gallery)



Anna Zemankova, "Untitled," 1970s, acrylic, pastel, paper collage, satin, embroidery, and mixed media on paper, 35 x 24-1/2 inches. (Good Luck Gallery) (Good Luck Gallery)