

“O HORIZONS”

An installation by Alexa Horochowski

This exhibition explores the uneasy relationship between ecological sustainability and the geopolitical forces driving farm production. Cycles of monoculture crop production, where one species is grown/raised in the same location repeatedly, though profitable in the short term, deplete soil nutrients, require the introduction of toxic chemicals and fertilizers that can contaminate water sources, and put at risk food supply chains.

An ever-growing world population puts further pressure on demand for higher crop yields and monocropping. In this installation a fallen sunflower ‘stands in’ for the death of native, wild foods, while groups of pitchforks suggest family units protecting their manufactured food source. A straw-filled, bio-net blanket lies on pyramidal, steel furrows. Bio blankets are typically used to regenerate plant life where soil has been stripped of life through industrial processes. The cast bronze mullein, hanging from the ceiling, grew in my South Minneapolis garden. Mullein is a non-native, invasive species that flourishes in soil disturbed by tilling and other processes.

The farm worker's cap is a powerful symbol of the American family farmer that is routinely exploited by corporations and political groups. The conservative think tank funded and backed by Charles and David Koch, *Freedom Partners*, recently put out a political ad depicting a golden-hour video of a farmer appearing to remove his MAGA hat. The ad states, "America's farmers work hard to put food on our tables. But because of new tariffs, our farmers' livelihoods are at risk...And now taxpayers are on hook for billions to bail out desperate farms. Farmers want trade not aid..." In the gallery, bronze farming hats with logos such as "John Deere" and "Asgrow" depict rural swag that may come with the purchase of a combine harvester, pesticides, or other agribusiness products.

Large, plastic, five-gallon buckets—such as those used to store industrial chemicals—get repurposed for tasks such as catching water leaks, carrying supplies or animal feed, and much more. These buckets are cast in wax and beeswax—a material made by vulnerable pollinators whose livelihood is closely intertwined with our food source, and whose future is put at risk by exposure to a host of industrial chemicals.