

# ARTFORUM

Ashton Cooper  
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## CRITICS' PICKS

**Aidan Koch**  
**PARK VIEW/PAUL SOTO**  
**2271 W. Washington Boulevard**  
**Los Angeles**

**February 1 – March 28, 2020**

Aidan Koch plucked the title of her show from a bulletin board at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, where a child had left behind the unassuming advice to “always put the rock back” over beach-dwelling creatures. This spirit of observation and curiosity tempered by carefulness and consideration unites the distinct bodies of work on view, which include recent drawings and an animation in



the graphic style that Koch is known for. A charming series of sculptures literalizes the show’s title: The artist has placed rocks on miniature beds made to fit the bodies of animals in her life (feline, canine, avian, and otherwise).

Most surprising is a new series of swirling, fanciful pastel drawings that signals a shift in Koch’s drawing practice from *disegno* to *colorito*. Her more recent approach calls to mind early forms of expressionism—the sinuous blue horses in *Two Horses in A Forest* (all works 2020) are straight out of Franz Marc, and the rippling, multi-tonal blue sky in *Goat Mountain* could be an homage to Georgia O’Keeffe. In the latter work, a pair of wavering blue hands reach out to slip their fingers between the petals of a yellow daisy that twist and elongate to hallucinatory proportions. The emphasis is on feeling, in both an affective and haptic sense. The show acknowledges, and perhaps even exemplifies, the human desire to engage with nature, but it also emphasizes respectful recognition of the nonhuman: It’s okay to touch and record the world around you as long as you employ what Koch describes as “appropriate and polite gesture[s]” along the way. One does not best understand the world by picking a flower, occupying a position of dominance, but by attentively negotiating with flora, fauna, and the rest.

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