

October 12, 2012

*Ann Wood: Violent Delights*

Women and Their Work

October 4 through November 17, 2012

It is not often that you see a medium list consisting of taxidermy molds, hunting decoys, foam, poured plastic, embroidery, puffy paint, wallpaper, fake flowers, push pins, and scrapbook paper. Ann Wood's exhibition *Violent Delights* uses common materials to touch upon both bleak thoughts of death and whimsical environments.

Her two-dimensional mixed media collages are framed in heavy, detailed frames which hark back to her influence by Dutch and Spanish still lifes of dead game. Wood describes her subject matter as the tension between love and hate or attraction and repulsion. She uses wallpaper, poured plastic, puffy paint and scrapbook paper for the backgrounds. With thread, she sews the subjects of her collages into the canvas.

*Triumph* displays two dead deer; their blood creates a single red pool in the center of the work. Flies and blackbirds surround the corpses. Two wolves, tied together by a pink ribbon, fight in *'Til Death*. *The Kill* depicts two wolves attacking a buck and *Still Life With Love Birds* shows a pig tied up by a yellow ribbon with two love birds complete with red hearts floating from them.

The two-dimensional works share embroidered subjects, flies, wallpaper, flowers and butterflies. Wood openly incorporates her "girly" side into her artwork. Threads blend and create a unique texture which pulls the viewer closer. Puffy paint applied to the surface creates a concise shape distinct to the application process of the bottled paint. Wood's use of quotidian and craft materials surpasses my expectations of the media.

In the center of the room, *Cluster* apprehends the viewer's attention. Two life-sized horses, one down on its side and the other standing over it, are situated next to a shimmering pool of blue poured plastic. In the pond, a swan moves away from the scene and toward the entrance of the gallery. A buck jumps over the standing horse, a canine stands on the two and another canine stands over the fallen horse. The creatures are covered in foam with push pins painstakingly and evenly distributed throughout the sculpture. Fake flowers adorn the sculpture and add a sense of softness. The narrative of *Cluster* is not so clear. I imagine the healthy horse watching over its fallen companion. Their friends, the buck, swan and two wolves or dogs, create a safe perimeter.

For me, *Cluster* steals the show. The sheer size of the sculpture grabbed my attention immediately. Yellow plastic drips off the animal figures and foam appears frozen as it grew outward from its point of application. Curiously, glitter is not listed as a medium, but it is found throughout the two-dimensional works and most startlingly in the blue plastic pond. The glitter catches and reflects the light in the gallery. The marks in the plastic from its expansion, like pancake batter on a hot pan, give the plastic a rippling appearance.

The work has a playfulness in it that I enjoy, but ultimately I wish they were cleaner and more invigorating. Wood uses thread to impressively create shades and tints in the subjects of her collages, but the separation of medium between the subject and background makes the work feel disjointed. I am glad she employs the puffy paint and wish its texture and abilities were explored further. The collage work doesn't quite stand up against *Cluster's* presence.

Admirably, Wood doesn't shy away from spending a lot of time with her work. The square footage of stitching and countless pins in the sculpture measure out the hours the artist spent on each piece. Ann Wood will have an installation work during [Texas Contemporary](#) and I'm very excited to see that in the coming days.