

Arts

Mandeville Gallery's 'Radical Kingdom' features wild creations

By Jenna Swartz - Feb 2, 2017

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The Mandeville Gallery, located in the Nott Memorial, currently features the intricate and vibrant exhibit "Radical Kingdoms." The display is comprised of work by contemporary artists George Boorujy, Portia Munson, Amy Ross, Juan Fontanive and Anne Siems. "Radical Kingdoms" challenges the viewer; one must acknowledge the beauty of the technique of the art while also dissecting the underlying messages embedded within. One could argue that this is quite difficult, because all the work is featuring either plants or animals, it can be arduous to detect the underlying meaning of each work. However, it can surely be accomplished.

One of the artists exhibited, George Boorujy, produces gorgeous work. Boorujy lives in New York City and this has greatly affected the content of his work. He states that people feel very distant from nature while living in New York. They joke that the wildlife of the city consists of primarily rats and pigeons.



*Pictured above is artist, George Boorujy's work. All of his works featured in the Nott Memorial display animals.
Beejit Sarker | Concordiensis*

The interesting thing is that although rats and pigeons have existed a long time without the human species, they now benefit and rely on us so much. Thus, nature's existence and ours is certainly intertwined; we influence nature and nature influences us.

Boorujy implants this concept into his work. For example, one of his works features two raccoons and a tortoise. The raccoons appear to be caught off-guard, as one of them clutches a half-eaten turtle egg in his hand. The work is exquisitely done – he used ink on paper and this allows us to experience the smaller yet significant details of the animals – the wispy raccoon's fur, the rough tortoise's shell.

Regarding the meaning of this work, I believe that Boorujy was trying to portray the unapologetic and unblemished nature of nature. He encourages us to simultaneously feel sympathy for the tortoise, but to also understand that this is the way in which animals have to act in order to survive.

Thus he forces us to look into our relationships with nature and further question and challenge our thoughts about the natural world.

Another artist whose profound work is exhibited is Portia Munson. Munson works in photography, sculpture, installation and painting in order to produce intricate works that feature deceased birds and energetic flowers.

According to Munson, she creates her work by scanning configurations of flowers that are arranged on the glass scanner bed and then prints the image. The fact that the birds are deceased in all her works reveals her sentiment toward her work- she is growingly concerned about the environment.

One of her works, "Cardinal," displays all the aspects spoken about above. Not surprisingly, the work features a plump cardinal surrounded by red, pink, orange and yellow flowers set on a black, stark background.

The fact that the bird is dead not only illustrates what I said earlier, but how Munson also utilizes the deceased bird as a means of commenting on our fractured relationship with nature. Perhaps she is implying that we are the cause of the death of this cardinal, remarking on how we abuse nature. Simultaneously, Munson demonstrates the beauty and life of nature. The fact that vibrant flowers surround the bird illustrates that although the concept of death is present, the beautiful prospect of life is present as well.

Finally, Amy Ross is another artist who produces thoughtful and layered art by utilizing collage, graphite, walnut ink and watercolor. Ross was a religious studies major at Connecticut College and went on to earn her master's in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School. She then studied printmaking at the School of Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Ross states that her background in religious studies and interest in folklore and mythology aided her in viewing nature with an imaginative eye. Additionally, she states that she scrutinizes the "interconnectedness of all life and the vulnerability that we all share."

Ross' work, Lovebirds No. 3, clearly demonstrates Ross' talent. Two red birds face one another, nestled in an array of beautiful flowers. Flowers, branches and leaves cascade and forms an orb on the page. Not only is the work charmingly done (she utilizes dainty colors and brush strokes) but Ross also embeds some of the deeper meanings discussed above, such as the interconnectedness of nature.

One can see this because she includes both plants and animals in this work, making it appear as if they are not only living, but also thriving together in nature (one can infer this by the vibrant colors and dynamic composition of the piece). This exhibit is a treat for anyone who is open and willing to spend some time peering deeper into each artist's layered, complex work. It will be shown in the Nott Memorial until June 18, 2017.