

Lauren Kelley

True Falsetto



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

December 1, 2012 - January 17, 2013

Austin, Texas



True Falsetto. Still from single channel stop motion animation with sound, Edition of 3.

Cover Panel: *Froufrou Conclusions.* Gallery view of single channel stop motion animation with sound, Edition of 5.

Lauren Kelley

Defiled Barbies and the Sick Satisfaction of the Binge

Lauren Kelley makes Claymation videos and sticky sweet collages that playfully create narratives about our culture's obsessions with needs and wants. Long known as an interdisciplinary artist, Kelley prefers to experience everything with her hands. Through the making of small sets, Kelley engages in the materiality of objects to create a singular world where brown Barbie dolls traverse a diorama-like landscape of everyday life.

Many of Kelley's videos feature Barbie dolls as the characters in her truncated and often oblique narratives. Susan Stern, director of the 1998 documentary *Barbie Nation*, explains that everyone has "Barbie Stories," and that in making her film, in the recording of these stories, she found there are only two types of people in the world: "Barbie glorifiers and Barbie defilers."¹ I, for instance, was always a defiler – making Barbie lie on top of Ken in some kind of imagined sex act or that one afternoon when, bored, I chopped all the hair off my doll. Kelley, I would argue, glorifies her Barbies in her very perversion, her defilement, of their material existence.

Take, for instance, her recent video *Froufrou Conclusions*, a short animation comprised of a series of vignettes, all of which are held together by the material of a dense and brightly colored cake frosting. The video begins in a thrift store, a scanning of objects in the store, miniature things affixed with miniature price tags. The camera slowly focuses on a dress in the window. Made out of frosting, the dress consists of looping mounds of dried and hardened sugar. The next section shows beauty contestants adorned in the frosting dresses. The contestants are brown-skinned Barbies and they stand

in a line, waiting to hear the results of the contest. The Barbies are animated through the addition and manipulation of clay; a hand moves in one shot, an eyelash flutters in another. The dolls jitter and shake, clay building up on their plastic faces and bodies.

As the camera does another scan of the creamy cake dresses, subtitles appear and note the contestants are "maintaining cool even under lights of 350 degrees. After weeks of polishing, consultation, critiques, and pleasure deprivation, the winner will be announced." One contestant's lips are pursed in anticipation; the cheeks of another are piled high with brown clay to emphasize cheekbones. Everyone is named a winner and in the next section of the video, one of the contestants goes to the grocery store, seemingly preparing for a binge. She trolls the aisles while the subtitles list off the variety of treats she might soon savor "Zebra cakes, Ding Dongs, Ho Hos, Nilla Wafers, Oatmeal Creams, Lemon Creams, Animal Crackers (the pink ones), Mini Muffins, Nutter Butters, Zingers, Milanos, Tastykakes, Snowballs, Fudge Rounds, Moon Pies, Kreemies, Donettes, Pop Tarts, Star Crunch, Little Bites, Whippets, Thin Mints, Coconut Creams,

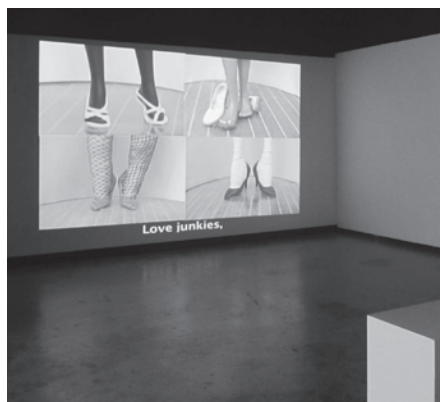
and Crullers. And Chewy Dips, and some Pinwheels, and some nutty bars." Finally, "And some chips" appears between the legs of this Barbie contestant who is apparently shoplifting them under her dress.



Froufrou Conclusions. Still from single channel stop motion animation with sound, Edition of 5.

In this comical list of treats, the candies and cakes begin to feel just as subversive as the defiled Barbies. The list represents the sick satisfaction of the binge, the hole that cannot be filled, of having your cake and eating it too. The video morphs into a kind of maniacal rendering of one's relationship to food and the body. Kelley weaves the notion of desire into four nonverbal vignettes suggesting the work is fun to take in and digest, but comes from a discontented place. From the shelves in the thrift store, to the pleasure deprivations of the beauty contestants, to the filled aisle of the grocery store, Kelley presents a perverted and darkly giddy take on desire, consumption, and the everyday grotesque.

These themes are not just apparent in the narrative of the video but also through the visuals. There is a reason Kelley chooses to have her scenes play out in thrift stores or grocery stores – she's obsessed with the miniature and such sites allow her to recreate mundane things in tiny sizes. These sets are precise and detailed but are also clearly



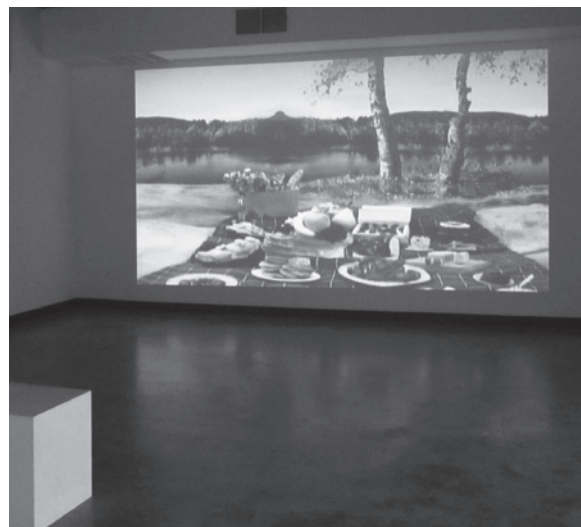
Froufrou Conclusions. Gallery view of single channel stop motion animation with sound, Edition of 5.

made by hand. In the final vignette of *Froufrou Conclusions*, as the names of sweets are listed, the camera glides by rows of handmade candies, shelves of cakes, and a freezer full of cartons of ice cream replete with small bits of ice.

Kelley's videos create a deep sense of play and wonder. This play is perhaps most evident in her video *True Falsetto*. In this animation, the Barbies no longer inhabit the space and yet, their absence creates a type of longing in the deep voice of the narrator. Kelley has created a still life, a tableaux of fake food laid out just so for the perfect picnic date. The narrator's plaintive story makes clear that his date never arrives. "Each season, of each year, I will be forgetting you. I waited years today, one year for every hour, all day. Though I knew you could not come tonight, I waited..." he intones over images of Claymation cheese and crackers, sandwiches, fruits, and coffee.² All the while, little flies get drunk on the untouched food. Thus, the picnic itself becomes a

main character calling to mind the drama and texture of Dutch Old Master still life paintings.

While engaging with desire, both met and unrequited, Kelley's work explores the complexities inherent in race and gender. In these two videos, Kelley subtly probes our preconceptions using dolls as stand-ins for human interaction. Kelley often explores and assesses the image of black people with particular emphasis on women. Her collage work in the exhibit provokes many questions as she mixes images of Barbies, their bodies abstracted by drawings and encroached upon by encounters with Ken, Barbie's male counterpart. Kelley works on the collages at the same time as she's making her videos; the two inform one another.



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However, the collages are more like sketches and do not capture the narrative method of the videos.

Kelley's indirect, non-linear approach to storytelling allows for a multitude of readings; she does not tell us exactly how to read gender and race within her work. Rather, she allows the Barbies the unspoken testimony of their own brown bodies, their gender, their yearning and discontent, all so playfully presented and decorated to draw attention, like the very sweets they hunger for.

Katie Geha is a writer based in Austin, Texas.



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¹ Susan Stern with Wendy Kolmar, "Remembering Barbie Nation: an Interview with Susan Stern," *Women's Studies Quarterly* vol. 30 no. ½ (Spring-Summer 2002), p. 189.

² Arthur Prysock "This is My Beloved" recording of poetry by Walter Benton, Verve Records, 1968.

Lauren Kelley

Born 1975 in Baltimore, MD

Education

- 1999 The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) MFA,
Chicago, IL
- 1997 Maryland Institute Collage of Art (MICA) BFA, Baltimore, MD

Selected Exhibitions

- 2012 *Upside*, Catherine Clark Gallery San Francisco, CA
The Bearden Project, Studio Museum in Harlem New York, NY
Facts, Fictions and Figures, Memphis College of Art
Memphis, TN
- 2011 *Frou Frou Conclusions* (Solo Exhibition), The Kitchen
New York, NY
Posing Beauty, USC Fisher Museum of Art Los Angeles, CA
Posing Beauty, Newark Museum Newark, NJ
- 2010 *Usable Pasts*, Studio Museum in Harlem New York, NY
- 2009 *The Girl Effect*, Lombard Fried Projects New York, NY
Posing Beauty, Curated by Deborah Willis, Tisch School
of the Arts New York, NY
Suddenly This Summer, Sikkema Jenkins & Co. New York, NY
Stimulus, Divereworks Art Space Houston, TX
No Zoning, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, TX
The Brand New Heavies, Curated by Mickalene Thomas,
Collette Blanchard Gallery New York, NY
- 2008 *Rupture in Rapture*, Arthouse at the Jones Center Austin, TX
Altoids Award, New Museum New York, NY
Bedtime Stories, The Redhouse Syracuse, NY
The Video Lounge, Vox Populi Philadelphia, PA
Reality Testing, LACE Los Angeles, CA
*Cinema Remixed And Reloaded: Black Women Artists
and the Moving Image Since 1970*, Spellman College
Museum of *Fine Art*, Atlanta, GA

Selected Honors And Awards

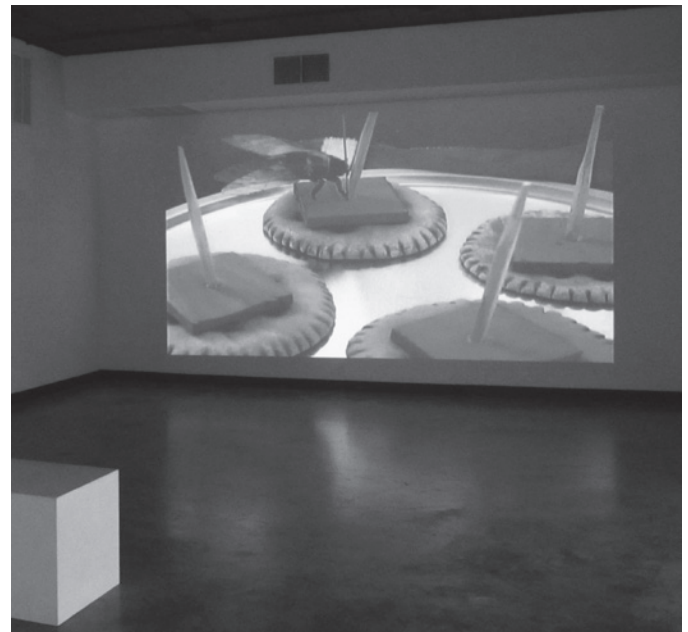
- 2011 *Louis Comfort Tiffany Award*, Louis Comfort Tiffany
Foundation, New York, NY
- 2008 *Altoids Award*, New Museum, New York, NY
- 2002 *Interdisciplinary Fellowship*, Illinois Arts Council, Chicago, IL

Selected Residencies

- 2012 Abrons Art Center, New York, NY
- 2009-10 Studio Museum in Harlem, AIR Program, New York, NY
- 2007-09 Glassell School of Art, Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts
Houston, Houston, TX
- 2007 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

Selected Articles And Reviews

- 2012 Warren, Tamara, "Artist Lauren Kelley Discusses Her Work
and Twisted Sister," *Lifeandtimes.com*, May 17, 2012
- 2010 Feeney, Mark, "Posing Beauty, Identity Show Looks At
Politics and Race," *Boston Globe*, October 31, 2010
- Ewing, John, "Usable Pasts, The Studio Museum in Harlem,"
Art Lies, Issue 67, Fall/Winter 2010
- Haber, John, "Race as a Usable Art," *HaberArts.com*,
September, 2010
- Donovan, Thom, "3 Museums 2 Days (part II of II),"
blog.art21.org, August 31, 2010
- Staff Reporter, "Goings on About Town, Art,"
The New Yorker, p. 12, August 16, 2010



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Froufrou Conclusions. Still from single channel stop motion animation with sound, Edition of 5.

Women & Their Work

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ANA FERNANDEZ

Real Estates and Other Fictions



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MAY 10 - JUNE 21, 2012

AUSTIN, TEXAS



11:50. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, courtesy of Dr. Ricardo Romo.

Cover Panel: *210*. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, courtesy of Joe A. Diaz.

Ana Fernandez

Real Estates and Other Fictions

The first images Ana Fernandez remembers making, as a little kid in the '70s, were of custom vans with murals on their sides. She can still tell each one of her aunts which car they drove.

Cars represent aspiration, value, self-expression, "and are individual, almost like people—they have some kind of living energy," Fernandez says. The auto-identities she renders in paint are flamboyant and slightly surreal, notes of frenzied color rendered with an almost fetishistic edge.



You Ain't Ready. Gouache on paper, 9 x 12 inches, courtesy of Joe A. Diaz.

Fernandez also paints portraits of the faces of American houses. Each house has been touched by unseen hands. They've been hung with holiday decorations, enlivened with potted plants, or lorded over by protective lion statues. But with rare exceptions, not a living soul can be found on her canvases of the last several years. Each of her carefully rendered domestic landscapes echoes with loneliness, even as they bustle with evidence of human presence. Fernandez gathers the raw data for these

images through a personal ritual using photography. She drives San Antonio's streets, pausing to photograph a particular fence railing here, a custom-painted pickup there, a cloud formation, a light bulb's glow. With no set destination, Fernandez wanders and drifts, turning left or right seemingly arbitrarily, stopping and shooting a photo of whatever catches her eye. She relishes and cultivates this fugue state and believes in it, citing the automatic writing of early 20th century Spiritualism. She describes herself behind the wheel as "the planchette of a Ouija board. I'm not directing it with my hands at all. Something else is moving it."

Fernandez stores the resulting photographs in a database of digital images that she browses through when she researches a new painting. She chooses a sky from one photo, a lawn decoration from another, a truck from an image from five years or three weeks ago, recombining the visual elements and composing set designs for myriad implied narratives. The paintings' narrative is predicated on what you bring to

the artist-viewer equation, whether a childhood memory or a set of expectations.

"I don't always know what the story is," she clarifies, adding "I don't think that's as important [as the fact that] I know which objects mean something to me in particular. But the viewer can build the puzzle from these pieces in any way they want...I want to draw them into the story, and give them detail after detail so that they just want to find out more."

After graduating from Roosevelt High School in San Antonio, Fernandez trained in studio practice at San Antonio College during a kind of golden age; the faculty in the mid 90's had built a rigorous and incredibly useful curriculum of studio technique, and SAC had a tradition of turning out highly skilled art makers. Many of South Texas' foremost contemporary artists, including Ed Rodriguez, Kimberly Aubuchon, Jason Willome, and Erik Parker, all studied there before acquiring a more theoretical university arts education.

Fernandez then earned her BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She talks about the change in urban surroundings and the alien climate. She relates the experience of riding in an elevated train in winter as darkness fell, and seeing half-seconds of other people's lives, a melancholy sensibility she brings even now to her work.

She went on to earn her MFA in painting from UCLA, and lived there for almost ten years. She returned to San Antonio after years of experimentation with abstraction, prints, and collage. Back home in Texas, Fernandez turned her eye towards the world around her with the zeal of a convert. She brought her whole tool kit to bear in re-experiencing San Antonio as an adult, and re-configuring it as a contemporary painter.

Fernandez' paintings stop short of connecting the dots, politically. What she puts forward about race, class, and gender is more ambiguous. Using more magical realism than social realism, she lays out imagery like a deck of Tarot. Modest homes. Trucks seemingly more expensive than the houses they're parked in front of. Spurs and Whataburger logos.

Home and love and family and tradition are the mainstay of America's concept of Mexican-Americans—that's the stereotypical positive side, mind you—but Fernandez isn't necessarily celebrating anything, either. She doesn't want you to be reassured; she doesn't want to educate you; she wants to captivate you, and make you an accomplice to hidden and obsessive fantasies, the moods she drives through and captures.

One unsettling large-scale painting, *Caninus*, shows a house shrouded in hedges, with two stone dogs facing each other. "It could be a witches' house," says Fernandez, who counts Goya's *The Flight of the Witches* as an inspiration for another painting, in which a gaggle of pointy-hatted piñatas hover above a roof. Another unlit house, *717*, is framed by a white-and-red balloon heart, which references both San Antonio's exuberant public face, its love for celebration and knack for rasquache decor, and something deeper, darker, and more ambiguous. Fernandez' tribute to San Antonio could be read as affectionate, or terribly critical.



717. Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.



313. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.

"Whenever I'm in somebody's house, I want to look through their cabinets, I want to open the drawers of their dresser and see how they've got their stuff arranged. What pills are they taking? What have they got in the refrigerator?"

She's more than a little fascinated by the mystery and true crime that is part of the

American cultural makeup. Her paintings arouse the kind of curiosity, which, she says, "Feels a little bit wrong, like I don't think I should want to know, but I do want to know."

Fernandez deliberately complicates the dialogue. The kind of art most critics think a gay Chicana should make, based on accepted principles and stereotypes, couldn't interest her less. She wants to breach the boundary between private and public. As a storyteller, she seems to be covering territory similar to that of Sandra Cisneros, but she designs her scenes of existential unease with the metered suspense of Alfred Hitchcock.

While her paintings also evoke the mystery and ominous dread of Edward Hopper, Fernandez draws viewers into her work with familiar imagery. Deeply rooted in a sense of place and a sense of culture, the paintings reflect Fernandez' abiding interest in the people around her even when they themselves are never in view.

Sarah Fisch is a writer living in San Antonio, Texas.

ANA FERNANDEZ

ana@anafernandez.com

b. Corpus Christi, TX

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Artists Looking at Art Series*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX
Staged, L2kontemporary, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Contemporary Artists Series: Ana Fernandez, Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio, TX
- 2011 Joan Grona Gallery, *Ana Fernandez*, curated by Aurturo Almeida, solo exhibition, San Antonio, TX
Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, *100 Palabras*, San Antonio, TX
- 2010 2nd FLR Gallery, *Texas*, solo exhibition, Chicago, IL
Winslow Garage, *Texas*, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Centro Cultural Aztlan, *Las Mujeres de Aztlan*, San Antonio, TX
Gallery 16, *Somny Smith: 100 Records*, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 MorYork Gallery, *Selected Works*, solo exhibition, Los Angeles, CA
Chicago Tourism Center, *Exquisite City: City of Cardboard*, Chicago, IL
- 2008 The Viaduct Theater, *Exquisite City: City of Cardboard*, Chicago, IL
- 2007 The Naional Museum of Mexican Fine Arts, *Pilsen Chamber of Commerce Art Auction*, Chicago, IL
Lill Street Art Center, *Small Works*, Chicago, IL
mn gallery, *Material & Light*, Chicago, IL

- 2006 L2Kontemporary, *i feel good, i feel great, i feel wonderful*, Chinatown, Los Angeles, CA
L2Kontemporary, *LA Libertine Society Presents: The Nature of Excess*, Chinatown, Los Angeles, CA
- 2004 Patricia Faure Gallery, *Project Room*, Santa Monica, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), *ARSG*, Los Angeles, CA
Art Center, *SUPERSONIC*, group show, Pasadena, CA
UCLA, *MFA Thesis Exhibition*, Los Angeles, CA
- 2001 Group Painting Show, *Gallery Two*, Chicago, IL
Water Tower Place, *Art Windows Marshall Fields*, Chicago, IL
- 2000 Group Painting Show, *Gallery Two*, Chicago, IL

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

UCLA Alumni Association
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Alumni Association
American Watercolor Society

EDUCATION

- 2004 MFA UCLA
2000 BFA The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

FLAT FILES & SLIDE REGISTRIES

- 2007- The Drawing Center, New York, NY
Present



Lions. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.



Caninus. Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches, courtesy of University of Texas at San Antonio.

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KELLY O'CONNOR

Last Resort



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MARCH 21 - MAY 9, 2013

AUSTIN, TEXAS

KELLY O'CONNOR

On the Diving Board

Macabre humor rests in the *Bottom of the Pool 3*, a collage in which Kelly O'Connor has replaced the turquoise water of a 1950s California swimming pool with a deep underground cavern. Blissfully ignorant people stand at the edge of the pool gazing in; a woman is walking out on the diving board, preparing to jump. O'Connor's art hovers on the edge of this metaphorical precipice, the last bask of sunlight before falling into the abyss. These moments are especially poignant from our contemporary vantage point. O'Connor summons the hopes, dreams and ideals of an ostensibly simpler America, when the United States was in the Cold War, and students hid under their desks during atomic bomb drills. But this fear was mediated by a future ideal in which technology might save humanity's inherently destructive urges.

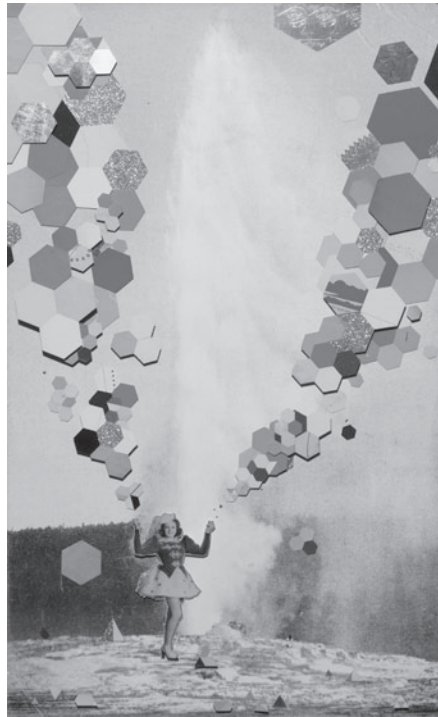
The dichotomies O'Connor portrays in her visual narratives give her work a shock, as if touched by magic. O'Connor scans and blows up found pictures from the 1950-60s to use as foundations for her collages. With color, sparkle and mystery, she alters the past so that her art illustrates many elements of sci-fi including time travel, fantasy and parallel worlds. Margaret Atwood explains that all science fiction comes

“from the same deep well: those imagined other worlds located somewhere apart from our everyday one: in another time, in another dimension, through a doorway into the spirit world, or on the other side of the threshold that divides the known from the unknown. Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction, Sword and Sorcery Fantasy, and Slipstream Fiction: all of them might be placed under the same large ‘wonder tale’ umbrella.”

Writers like Ray Bradbury and Atwood combine the real with the imagined, setting

up fictional narratives that awaken the reader's real-world awareness. The unimaginable becomes real, with new words and worlds. O'Connor does this visually.

Several recurring stylistic themes bring about her art's visual paroxysms. In combination with the found photographs and constant presence of a mid-century modern aesthetic, there are brilliant color palettes; sunbursts and rays of color made from yarn and paper; gilded wasp nests with colored eggs; hexagons; and haunting characters from popular culture, such as Judy Garland. Like cairns or a graffiti tag, they lead the viewer into O'Connor's alternative world.



Snap. Found image digitally printed with found paper and glitter, 47" x 30", 2013.

The sunbursts and hexagons behave like codes or mutations, taking over the graininess of the historical image; masking certain parts of the photograph; rewriting, in stark contrast, the original narrative. These alterations visually demonstrate

how we perceive history and the psychological tricks our brains play on us about projections and memory.

O'Connor's alterations are performed with a focused precision, so much so that from a distance they appear digital, but upon closer examination, they are clearly and adeptly hand-cut. The complexity of her images is striking. O'Connor uses a variety of stencils to create hexagonal shapes from record album covers. She then cuts them out with an X-Acto knife and inlays them, setting them into tight patterns that exist in layers and reliefs. For example, the hexagons or starbursts may be 1/4" over the image, which adds a three-dimensional depth. These paper tessellations are as ornate and exact as the Alhambra's tile work.

O'Connor's influences include Trenton Doyle Hancock, Anna Gaskell and Tony Feher, artists also engaged in the practice of creating imaginative worlds that inform us of our own. O'Connor's art corresponds with the weird and mysterious presence of Hancock's mounds; the unimaginable beauty that Feher brings out in colored masking tape or PVC pipe; and Gaskell's evocative photographs which leave a lingering sense of unease.

Disneyland, Yosemite National Park and the Grand Canyon entered O'Connor's psyche as a child, when she visited them during summer family road trips. Her selection of images in *Last Resort* includes the natural features of these parks along with contrived environments of intended fun, such as swimming pools, geodesic domes and Disneyland. As opposed to free form, novel experiences, controlled environments are designed with the recreation already imagined and mapped out. Like the experience of riding a monorail, visitors submit themselves to these spaces' authority.

Though designed with the best of intentions, things can go wrong within these environments, and, like a microcosm of real life,

people who are trying to escape get jolted back into reality. *Monorail* is a found photograph of the HemisFair 1968 monorail accident, when two trains collided and fell off of the rail, causing one person to be killed and 48 injured. Starburst images blot out the most dramatic parts of the photograph.

Twirl is an image of Disneyland's Mad Tea Party, the ride with giant turning and swirling teacups, pixilated with O'Connor's colorful hexagonal patterns. The dizzy whorl reminds the viewer of how, in dreams, it is the unconscious that twists and spins ephemera from each of our respective histories into metaphorical narratives that shed insight onto our contemporary lives.

In *Color Me*, a costumed Judy Garland perches jauntily on the edge of a geyser that may spew at any moment. Beneath her, concealing the boiling waters within the cavity, O'Connor's hexagonal shapes are inset and adorned with clusters of starbursts to form a brilliant, colorful pool that masks the impending disaster, like a visual rendering of unconscious denial. *Color Me* reflects how Garland's tragic personal battles with drug addiction and depression remained invisible from her screen personae.

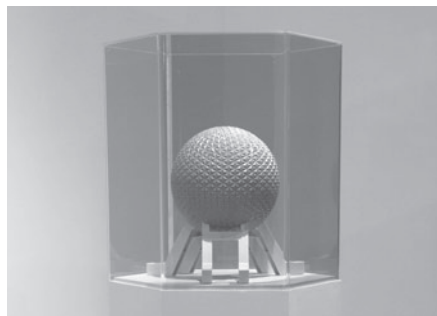
At the entrance to *Last Resort, Monument (EPCOT)*, a model of Disneyworld's "Spaceship Earth," sits inside of a hexagonal sunny yellow Plexiglas vitrine. Beyond this model, and slightly off center of the room, is *Ruin*, a life-sized, 9' high x 18' wide geodesic dome made from gold, white and light blue painted wood panels. A few of the panels are removed to frame views from inside and outside of the dome. The back part of the dome remains open enough to allow viewers to walk inside. Ominous music from *The Shining* plays inside the dome's blackened interior. The space allows for a "whispering gallery" acoustical effect, causing the off-pitch shrieking wind instruments to reverberate inside. Glitter and gilded wasp nests dot the black interior, filled with colorful "eggs,"

some glittered, so that when the light shines off of them they sparkle like stars.

Rays of yellow, gold, pink, blue and orange string stream from floor to ceiling like beams of light. These rays are intermittently placed throughout the space, amidst the dome and broken up rubble of cement, rebar, and powdery white gypsum, all of which sparkle with multi-colored glitter. This fantastical sparkle tells viewers they are in mythical territory, under the spell of its narrative.

In another corner of the gallery rests an abandoned 1960's-era metal umbrella and white chaise lounge molded out of fiberglass. Each of the fans of the umbrella is painted in a different color of O'Connor's palette: white, light blue, gold, pink, orange and red. More wasp nests hang inside the umbrella's canopy, echoing the threat of menace from the dome. These nests mark the time that has elapsed since the umbrella was actually serving its intended use. The nests' presence and the umbrella's colors indicate their appropriation from contrived resort confines into the new context of O'Connor's art.

These features fit well within Atwood's "wonder tale umbrella." O'Connor's parallel universe allows the viewer to step, like Alice through the looking glass, into a beautiful, magical space. Even so, the presence of the wasps and the eerie music tapers this delight, signaling danger. She travels back in time to capture past hopes unmet, and invents a parallel world that holds these tensions.



Monument (EPCOT). Wood, acrylic, and found plastic model, 60" x 18" x 18", 2013.



Sunburst. Aluminum umbrella, fiberglass chair, and golden wasp nests, 8 feet in diameter, 2013.

Inventor, futurist and architect Buckminster Fuller patented his mathematical formulas for the design of the geodesic dome in 1956. Built at world fairs and exhibitions, the geodesic domes became popular as beacons of a promising future. These domes were models of "ephemerality"—doing more with less. Other progressive ideas by Fuller include Cloud Nine cities that could migrate to optimal climates around the globe. Fuller and Bradbury collaborated on the 18-story geodesic sphere at Epcot Center. "Spaceship Earth" gives visitors a ride through the inside that documents humanity's technological progress.

This progress continues today, yet there are still political fights against scientific advances. Writer and scientist C.P. Snow warned against the consequences of scientific ignorance in his 1959 essay, which argued for artists and scientists to build bridges that may connect their fields.

With its nod to Fuller's geodesic dome, *Last Resort* locates itself within the chasm between these two fields. O'Connor's art is filled with a melancholy that evokes Snow's and Fuller's expectations that the work of scientists and artists might someday intersect on the neutral and fertile ground of the imagination. Instead, our society stands poised on O'Connor's diving board.

Wendy Atwell received her M.A. in Art History and Criticism from The University of Texas at San Antonio. She is the author of *The River Spectacular: Light, Color, Sound and Craft on the San Antonio River*.

KELLY O'CONNOR

Lives and works in San Antonio, TX

EDUCATION

- 2005 University of Texas at Austin, B.F.A, Studio Art
2003 Santa Chiara Study Center, Texas A&M University,
Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Last Resort*, Women & Their Work, Austin, TX
2012 *Texas Contemporary Art Fair*, (solo booth),
David Shelton Gallery, Houston, TX
2011 *Post Utopia*, David Shelton Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2010 *Neverending Story*, Thunderbird Hotel Lounge, Marfa, TX
Worn by the Sun, Sala Diaz, San Antonio, TX
2009 *Magnetic Fields*, Joan Grona Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2007 *Wonderland*, Project Room, Conduit Gallery, Dallas, TX
Kelly O'Connor: New Work, Joan Grona Gallery,
San Antonio, TX
2005 *Dissecting Disney*, The New Gallery, University of
Texas at Austin
Insulation Incubation, Closet Space Gallery, Austin, TX

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Prelude: Beginning a Conversation*, David Shelton Gallery,
Houston, TX
2011 *New Works on Paper*, David Shelton Gallery, San Antonio, TX
Artists Looking at Art, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX
Col-lage, Bank of America Center, curated by
Kinzelman Art Consulting, Houston, TX
Suite Art Fair, Belmont Hotel, curated by
David Shelton Gallery, Dallas, TX
Works on Paper, David Shelton Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2010 *Invited 6*, Clamp Light Studios and Gallery, San Antonio, TX
In-Appropriate, Joan Grona Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2010, Flight Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2009 *Lonely are the Brave*, Blue Star Contemporary Art Center,
San Antonio, TX
2008 *Chalk it Up*, Artpace, showcase artist, San Antonio, TX
And so the story goes... Unit B Gallery, San Antonio, TX
2007 *Medicine Show: The Poster Art of Ballroom Marfa*,
Ballroom Marfa and ArtLies, Marfa, TX
Serious Fun, Dougherty Arts Center, Austin, TX
Dark Objects, Light Matter, Galleri Urbane, Marfa, TX
Texas Biennial, Bolm Studios, Austin, TX
2004 *Sprout*, Austin Museum of Art, Laguna Gloria, Austin, TX
2003 *Food Concepts*, Santa Chiara Study Center,
Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy

AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

- 2011 Artist Foundation of San Antonio,
Rick Liberto Award for Visual Arts
2010 Artist Foundation Finalist, Arthouse,
Nominated for the Texas Prize

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2011 Snyder, Hills, *Kelly McCool*, David Shelton Gallery, San
Antonio, Might Be Good, Issue # 176, October, 14, 2011
Goddard, Dan, David Shelton: *Kelly O'Connor's*
"Post-Utopia," Glasstire, September 28, 2011
2010 Atwell, Wendy, *Sala Diaz*, San Antonio, Might Be Good,
Issue #154, October 1, 2010
Morris, Jerid Reed, *The Mother Country*, San Antonio
Current, September 8, 2010
2009 Silva, Elda & Bennett, Steve, *Best of 2009: Visual Arts*,
San Antonio Express News, December 26, 2009
Judson, Ben, *Lonely Are the Brave*, Artlies, No. 63.
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Fisch, Sarah, *Lately Come the 'Brave,'* San Antonio Current,
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Goddard, Dan. *"Lonely Are the Brave" at Blue Star*,
Glasstire, August 2009
Bennett, Steve, *Dark Cloud Hangs Over Artist's Happy*
Places, San Antonio Express News, June 2009
2008 Ras, Barbara, *Art at Your Doorstep*, Trinity Press,
editor Riley Robinson, May, 2008
Wolff, Elaine, *Happily never after*, San Antonio Current,
February 20, 2008
Belasco, Jessica, *Childhood stories turn to the dark side*,
210SA, Page 27, January 30, 2008
2007 *Galleri Urbane artists weave heavy subjects with light materials*,
The Big Bend Sentinel, Page 6, April 5, 2007



Monorail. Found image digitally printed with
found paper, 32 1/2" x 38 1/2", 2013.



Last Resort. Gallery View, dimensions variable, 2013.

Cover Panel: *Last Resort*. Gallery view, dimensions variable, 2013.



Color Me. Found image digitally printed with found paper, 49" x 79", 2013.

Women & Their Work

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women and
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Ann Wood

Violent Delights



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

October 4 - November 17, 2012

Austin, Texas



The Kill. Embroidery Thread, Puffy Paint, Scrapbook Paper, Poured Plastic, Wallpaper, Collage, Canvas, 84 x 83 x 5 inches, 2012.

Cover Panel: *Cluster, Detail.* Taxidermy Mannequins, Fake Flowers, Foam, Pushpins, Thread, Poured Plastic, Glitter, 123 x 144 x 204 inches, 2012.

Ann Wood
Violently Delightful

Encountering Ann Wood's work is akin to being enveloped by a modern-day Grimm's Fairy Tale: the work seduces you with its loveliness and charm, and then just like Hansel and Gretel, you find yourself under its saccharine spell and you realize too late that things might be just a bit more ominous than at first glance. The power of Wood's work hinges on the tension created by combining opposition and contradiction into a single, mutually exclusive set. A relatively short list of disparate descriptors would include: love and hate; life and death; nature and artifice; attraction and repulsion; whimsy and apprehension; fine art and craft; male and female; desire and obsession; ridicule and reverence. As evidenced by the installation's title *Violent Delights*, Wood's work straddles the metaphorically thin line that separates these notions.

Like Wood's previous installations, the entire tableau is composed of both wall-dependant works and three-dimensional sculptures, and is thoroughly entrenched in the Rococo tradition with its emphasis on decoration and extravagant use of ornament. Wood's work provides no place for the viewer's eyes to rest. There is a distinct sense of horror vacui wherein the work's entire surface is decoratively adorned. In the four wall-mounted



Cluster, Detail. Taxidermy Mannequins, Fake Flowers, Foam, Pushpins, Thread, Poured Plastic, Glitter, 123 x 144 x 204 inches, 2012.

works, the central figures are surrounded by or placed upon layered strata built of scraps of printed-paper, cutout stencils, appliqué, puffy paint, and poured plastic. While these may be considered paintings in the conventional sense that they are two-dimensional framed canvases, they are also tapestries in that subjects have been embroidered rather than drawn or painted. This distinctly feminine tradition of hand embellishing with thread alludes to both aspects of what has often been considered "women's work" and/or craft. The obsessive compulsiveness of the work recalls the early installations of American artist Liza Lou, who used the craft material of glass seed beads to encrust an entire room (*Kitchen* (1991–96)) in sparkling splendor, a dazzling homage to domesticity. While Wood's nod to feminism doesn't go quite as far, one should note that the female character in all of her work is typically denoted by a flower placed behind the ear (a feature often identifying the artist herself).

Wood credits her childhood spent amidst the rich outdoors of California as the basis for her adult obsession with nature and the way it is depicted in art, especially the traditions of Dutch, Flemish and Spanish still life paintings of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Decorative portrayals of baskets of fruit or vases of flowers eventually led to compositions featuring the spoils of the hunt, flayed carcasses waiting further butchering, or lavish feasts of glistening meats. These paintings served as both literal illustrations of the luxuries afforded the upper class while also being thinly veiled reminders of the consequences of gluttony. Wood equates the genre with darkness and masculinity and says that her work is an attempt to make something that is initially very feminine in appearance, while continuing to explore morose subjects such as death and decay. In *Still Life with Love Birds*, a fattened sow hangs upside down, suspended by a polka-dotted bow (another



Still Life With Love Birds. Embroidery Thread, Puffy Paint, Scrapbook Paper, Poured Plastic, Wallpaper, Canvas, 82 x 52 x 5 inches, 2012.

nod to the still life tradition where animals were often tacked to a wall), which simultaneously serves as a fashion accessory. Glittered flies buzz about and a pair of black birds talk of love (suggested by the tiny hearts around them), seemingly oblivious to the victim hovering above. These birds, symbols of menace and omens of a darker presence, could also be harbingers of death, and are frequent characters in Wood's work.

The birds, as well as the bow, reappear in *Til Death*, wherein two wild dogs are tethered together in a show of teeth-barring mutual aggression, prepared to fight until death. Their ferocity is offset by the sweet, meadowy green background, pink garland and pastel blossoms. Tacked on the wall in the artist's studio adjacent to the work, a scrap of paper offered a biblical verse warning of the danger of malicious thoughts or words that may be conveyed by a bird whispering in your ear. In this case, whatever account was proffered has led to the bloody demise of one bird, while the tattletale continues to provoke with an inflammatory rumor secret-

ly whispered into the female dog's ear. We find a similar canine couple in *The Kill* who have presumably worked together to take down their prey rather than turning on one another. Blood oozes from the ill-fated elk, but all is well in the world where the grass is green, food is abundant, and butterflies soar. The golden sky conjures Byzantine religious icons and is yet another foil to captivate the viewer with splendor only to repel with gore and guts. In Ann Wood's world, the grotesque is tempered with glitter; the hideous is festooned in flowers.

In the most overtly paradoxical piece in the exhibition, two young deer lay with their heads in a pool of blood, their bodies twisted in agony, having met an unspecified end. Like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the doomed cervine lovers of *Triumph* are immortalized at the exact moment wherein passion has proven to be deadly. The proof of their love—tiny red glittered hearts—is congealed in the ooze of blood. Wood plays upon the idea of deer as the huntsman's trophy and of love being the ultimate reward. The title of the exhibition itself alludes to a verse from *Romeo and Juliet*, "These violent delights have violent ends and in their triumph die, like fire and powder, which as they kiss consume." Here Romeo is warned that love, like fireworks, leaves nothing behind once the ecstasies have faded. While *Triumph* illustrates this notion of living fast and dying young, the viewer is left with a powerful memory of love's lost labor.

The pinnacle in Wood's investigation of the natural world is the large, yellow sculpture in the center of the gallery. As much wedding cake as equestrian monument, *Cluster* is the three-dimensional embodiment of the characters and themes of Wood's paintings—on a grandiose scale. Using bare taxidermy forms, Wood cloaks her surreally feminine version of nature in synthetic flowers, poured plastic and foam,



Cluster, Detail. Taxidermy Mannequins, Fake Flowers, Foam, Pushpins, Thread, Poured Plastic, Glitter, 123 x 144 x 204 inches, 2012.

and candy colored quilter's pins. Unlike the work of Houston-based artist Elaine Bradford, who uses crochet to create new creatures from mounted animals (like Long-neck, a monster-sized python-cum-antelope wearing a striped cardigan sweater), Wood's animals retain their essential nature as horses, or coyotes, or stags. However, they now look like they've been frosted in lemon butter cream icing and decorated with fondant roses and sugar sprinkles.

Like the proverbial "deer caught in the headlights," the moment is frozen in time.



Triumph. Embroidery Thread, Puffy Paint, Scrapbook Paper, Poured Plastic, Wallpaper, Canvas, 126 x 50 x 5 inches, 2012.

Two coyotes have momentarily ceased their feast to examine the intruding viewer, giving the large stag just the moment needed to craft an escape. The mare (note the roses behind the ear) lies on the ground, having already been killed by her predator, her essential fluids pooling beneath her. Oblivious to the adjacent turmoil, a graceful swan cranes its neck as it glides over a pond of glittered cerulean water. No military dignitary sits proudly astride the confectionary stud; no lost German children shove fistfuls of cake into their mouths. Yet an underlying sense of menace is clearly there.

Wood's wonderfully paradoxical journey introduces the viewer to an ominous yet saccharine reality where death smells like a bakery and carrion sparkles like diamonds. Her contemporary take on death and decay has a decidedly feminine sensibility, yet does not back away from the violent delights or their inevitable violent ends. If a cake melts in the forest, does anyone hear it?

Alex Irvine is the former Executive Director of the Galveston Arts Center.

¹ Ecclesiastes 10:20, "Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say," *Holy Bible*, New International Version ©1973

² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

³ This work was included in Bradford's exhibition *Freaks of Nurture*, held at Women & Their Work, Austin, February 24–March 31, 2007.

Ann Wood

Selected Exhibitions

- 2012 Women & Their Work, *Violent Delights*, solo exhibition, Austin, TX
Three Walls, *Still. Life.*, solo exhibition, San Antonio, TX
Participating venue Contemporary Arts Month
Art League, *Flying Solo: Six Emerging (Unrepresented) Artists* (scheduled), Houston, TX
- 2011 Galveston Arts Center, *Garnish*, solo exhibition, Galveston, TX. Curator: Clint Willour
Participating venue in the 2011 Texas Biennial
San Jacinto College Black Box Studio Theatre, *Hush*, solo exhibition, Houston, TX
Anya Tish Gallery, *Guns and Roses: Shannon Cannings and Ann Wood* (two person), Houston, TX
- 2010 Lawndale Art Center, *Spoiler*, solo exhibition, Houston, TX
Anya Tish Gallery, *Creature Comforts*, Houston, TX
- 2007 *Flycatcher*, solo exhibition
University Art Gallery, University of Massachusetts, *Science, Religion, Art: Greater New Bedford Artists Responding to Johan Jacob Scheuchzer, "PHYSICA SACRA," 1731-35*, Dartmouth, MA, Curator: Dr. Lasse Antonsen
- 2005 Women & Their Work, *A Stitch in Time*, Austin, TX
Curator: Joan Davidow
Hera Gallery, *Cornucopia: 21st Century Still Life*, Wakefield, RI
- 2004 San Antonio College Visual Art Center Gallery, *Into the Arena: Three Select New American Talent Artists*, San Antonio, TX
The Dallas Center for Contemporary Arts, *Piece Work: Fiber and Multiples*, Dallas Texas. Curator: Joan Davidow
- 2002 Arthouse, *New American Talent: The Seventeenth Exhibition*, Austin, TX (catalog)
- 2000 UTSA Art Gallery, *Neo Rococo*, San Antonio, TX
Curator: Dr. Frances Colpitt
- 1999 The Arkansas Art Center, *The 42nd Annual Delta Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, Little Rock, AR (catalog)
Craighead-Green Gallery, *New Texas Talent V*, Dallas, TX

Education

- 1999 MFA University of Texas at San Antonio
2003 BFA California State University, Chico

Selected Reviews

- 2011 Britt, Douglas. **Guns and Roses**. *Houston Chronicle*, Section 29-95, P. 28. July 2, 2011.
Klaasmeyer, Kelly and Troy Schulze. **Guns and Roses**. *Houston Press*, Volume 23, Number 21, p. 35.
- 2010 Klaasmeyer, Kelly. **Bless Their Hearts, Part II**. *Glasstire Texas Visual Art Online*.
Kroll, Jordan. **Creature Comforts**. *Visual Seen: Extending Art Online*.
Nick, Paul. **Spoiler Alert**. *Houston Press*, p.22, May 20-26, 2010.
NPR Front Row Interview. KUHf. May 26, 2010.
- 2007 Perdue, Beth. **Art 3: Three artist installations open at Art Works! tomorrow**. *The Chronicle*, p. 12, January 9, 2007.
Boyce, David B. **Impressions of ArtWorks! Installations**. *The New Bedford Standard Times*, p. C04. January 14, 2007.
- 2005 Hesser, Martina. **Wakefield's Horn of Plenty**. *Mercury*, June 15, 2005.
Rodriguez, Bill. **Slices of Life: The thing's the thing at Hera Gallery**. *The Providence Phoenix*, p. 12. June 17, 2005.
- 2004 Daniel, Mike. **Fiber art at Dallas Center for Contemporary Art**. *The Dallas Morning News*, Guide, p.56. January 30, 2004.
Montemayor, Natalia. **Exhibit exposes three Texas artists**. *The Ranger*. January 30, 2004.
Heinkel-Wolfe, Peggy. **Gallery Watch: Fabric Art Illustrates the Fiber of Life**. *The Fort Worth Star Telegram*. January 31, 2004.
- 2002 Lara, Jerry. **Artistic Threesome show skills: Diverse Stylings Seen at SAC**. *San Antonio Express News*. Section H. February 4, 2004.
Puelo, Risa. **Stitch in time: Women and Their Work**. *Art/les*, #49, Spring, 2002.
- 2000 Atwell, Wendy. **Neo-Rococo, University of Texas At San Antonio Art Gallery**, *Art/les*, #26, p. 88. Spring 2000.
Goddard, Dan. **Arts: 'Girly' Art Challenges Stereotypes**, *San Antonio Express News*, sections E, N. April 12, 2000.
McBride, Elizabeth, **New American Talent**. *Art/les*, number 36, p. 68-69 Fall 2002.
- 1999 Bokamper, Jerry. **'Expo '99' at 500X Gallery**. *The Dallas Morning News*. Guide, p. 4. January 8, 1999.
Arend C. Zwartjes, **Andrea Caillouet, Ann Wood, UTSA Satellite Space**, *Art/les*, Number 23, p. 59 Summer. 1999.
Navarro, John. **Crush**, *Voices Of Art*, October-November, p. 19-23. 1999.



'Til Death. Embroidery Thread, Puffy Paint, Scrapbook Paper, Poured Plastic, Wallpaper, Collage, Canvas, 72 x 72 x 5 inches, 2012.

Women & Their Work

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