

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Art in America
March 2003

Ann Craven at Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert

Reminiscent of both "Hang in There" kitty posters and Audubon prints, Ann Craven's vividly colored paintings of fawns and tropical birds posed against blurred backdrops are cloying but sumptuous reminders of the pleasures of her medium. By turns sweet, ironic and seductive, the works take their place in a Warholian tradition of subversiveness. Craven often makes very similar, if not identical, paintings in pairs or threesomes, sometimes in several sizes. A concurrent show at the Allston Skirt Gallery in Boston presented many of the same images as this New York exhibition, only smaller.

Five of the 17 works in New York were medium to large-size horizontal canvases depicting deer, or "dear," as the artist calls them in the titles. In *Dear* (2002), a spotted fawn stands in a field of daisies, gazing at the viewer with

a moist brown eye. One ear glows pinkly in the warm afternoon sun. The same summer's-day blue and new greens grace the nearly identical canvas, *Dear in Daisies* (1998). In both, the foreground flowers and the animal are set off by idealized backgrounds. The image could be an enlarged cell from the movie *Bambi*.

The rest of the exhibition resembled a garden aviary of brightly colored birds. Here, too, the works are serialized or duplicated. This cloning produces a stereoscopic effect in some instances, as in *Yello Fello I* (2001) and *II* (2002), 6-by-4-foot canvases hung side by side. In each, a sharply defined, chesty yellow canary appears almost three-dimensional in front of soft-focus hothouse flowers and an airbrushed Miami-pink sky. *Hello, Hello, Hello* (2002), a triptych of three identical images of an African Grey parrot, mimics the parrot's tendency to repeat. Each painting could be an ornithological study. Careful brushstrokes detail a beady eye, feathers, beak and claws. Yet here, as in every other Craven work, something familiar turns up strange. In this weird Craven-Disney world, the paintings look like animation or cartoons, have the palette of a candy dish and the sensibility of an airbrushed novelty T-shirt. Yet accurate details keep the fantasy grounded, and so the works fluctuate constantly between hallucination and reality, highlighting the moment of tension as nature is converted into art. —Anastasia Aukerman



Ann Craven: *Hello, Hello, Hello*, 2002, oil on linen, triptych, each element 74 by 50 inches; at Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert.

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