

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Tema Celeste
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ann craven

Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert, Inc.
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Ann Craven's lush, candy-colored paintings of large scale birds stem from an unequivocal conviction that art can be gorgeous while maintaining its conceptual referent to contemporary dialogue. Her clearly delineated birds set against blurred backgrounds of flowers and impossibly colored skies utilize audaciously beautiful color, painterly brushwork, and repetitive imagery. Craven derives her source material from direct observation of nature (the flowers) as well as from photo-mechanical reproductions (the birds).

A city dweller, Craven's experience of nature is bound by reproductions of it; and as such her work is about the nature of representation rather than the representation of nature. More akin to Pop iconography than reality, the work comes out of Craven's fascination with multiples; with the ubiquitous, mawkish magazine, television, and greeting card images of nature twice removed from actuality that bombard the eye. Cards in particular inform the work; the seductive ways in which they are displayed with repetitive exactitude. Asserting painting's primacy over mechanical reproduction, Craven repeats her motifs, but alters them subtly.

"Hello, Hello, Hello" (2002) portrays three slightly dissimilar paintings of gray parrots with glowing crimson tails, set against gray backgrounds. The subtle alterations and hand painting imbue the parrots with an uneasy edge that makes them seem threateningly animate rather than poetically idealized. In tandem with deceptively sentimental imagery, Craven pushes the edge with unabashedly sweet color as well. In the "Yello Fello" (2002) series, golden yellows, sky blues, and intense pinks with cherries dispense entirely with the conventions and taboos of minimalist taste. Pushing her work yet further into forbidden territory, Craven tackles images of deer in fields of daisies. Non-ironic and almost heroic in their disregard of potential critical disdain, these works deal with ecological concerns about the wanton destruction of natural environments. Appropriating imagery from a scene in the 1973 sci-fi film *Soylent Green*—in which an old man from an overpopulated future dies peacefully while viewing pictures of a nature he knew only briefly long ago—Craven confronts the very real possibility that reproductions of nature may soon be all that is left.

Joyce Koroctin



| Ann Craven *I'm Sorry*, 2002, oil on linen, 153.7 x 121.9 cm.

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