

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

The New York Times
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Ann Craven

*Klemens Gasser & Tanja
Grunert Inc.
524 West 19th Street, Chelsea
Through Oct. 5*

At first glance, you may think Ann Craven's paintings take off rather prettily on real creatures. But no, these deer and birds are fakey simulacra, the kinds of wild-life found on greeting cards and kitschy calendars. The deer, or dear, as Ms. Craven prefers to call them, pose fetchingly in green grass; the birds, of mixed ancestry and shrill plumage, perch on branches against blurry floral backgrounds.

"Hit Song Bird," the poster bird for the show, is a robust *rara avis* with a breast of flaming orange subsiding into white and gray, the rest of its plumage a vivid blue. A tough one, wise in the ways of its world, it opens its black beak, presumably in a warble, as it perches against a wallpaperlike ground of big red poppies and cerulean sky.

"Yellow Fello I and II," a pair of identical paintings (multiple images, even though done by hand enhance the banality of the project), depict two canary-yellow chirpers, their breasts divided almost like cleavage. Cute and sexy but with wickedly sharp talons, they pose against a pink ground adorned with hollyhocks. But this sprightly deliberately slick artificial aviary goes on too long. After all, there isn't much new in the story of kitsch befouling nature.

GRACE GLUECK

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