ABSTRACT

In conjunction with a sabbatical in 2012-13, this project enabled the development of an entirely new body of drawing work that foregrounds ethological, environmental and cultural aspects of human-animal relations. Scientific perspective on the nature and magnitude of animal consciousness is in flux, with the most recent research suggesting that animals are capable of understanding the terms of co-existence at the boundary between species. The numerous up-close encounters I had with various imprinted birds and mammals have left me with a sense of the artificial constraints under which these creatures exist, often at the periphery of our world.

The study of birds and mammals I conducted in the Midwest contrasted quite sharply against what I experienced in viewing the cave art in France and Spain. The overwhelming impression I came away with from the cave art I viewed was a sense of prehistoric humans’ connectivity with and reverence toward the animals depicted. Words can neither adequately summarize the magnificence of the cave art I experienced nor convey the profound impact the work has had on me.

These two, seemingly disparate areas of research I have undertaken in the past year have greatly complicated my thinking and approach to my artwork – which is good. They have heightened my sensitivity toward and understanding of my subject, and the confluence of the two has inspired unforeseeable avenues of creativity.

RESULTS

This new work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at 2013 at the University of Anchorage, Alaska, and at John A. Day Gallery at the University of South Dakota; additionally, selections from this work have been exhibited in group exhibitions at the Art Resource Center in Chicago, IL, the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, and the Cooperstown National Juried Exhibition (where the work received a Juror’s Citation). This past fall, work from this series was exhibited at Sylvia White Gallery in Ventura, CA, and was on display at the Kerr Gallery at Western Michigan University. The work will travel for solo exhibitions at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, MI in 2014 (which will also include extensive educational programming around issues of animal consciousness) and Troy University in Alabama in 2015. In addition, I have pending juried and solo applications for the following exhibitions:

- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
- Manuels Gallery, Cincinnati, OH
- Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, IL
- National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY
- Chaum Dallas National Exhibition, Richmond, KY
- Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT

I have come away from this research with a far deeper understanding of the complexity of human and animal relations, particularly the extent to which humans have come to dictate the terms of co-existence. The numerous up-close encounters I had with various imprinted birds and mammals have left me with a sense of the artificial constraints under which these creatures exist, often at the periphery of our world.

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