



1  
*Integral*, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 20"  
2  
*Consciousness*, acrylic on canvas, 6 x 12"  
3  
*Sustain*, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 12"  
4  
*Dissociate*, acrylic on canvas, 6 x 12"

AMY GUIDRY

## Strange worlds

**A**my Guidry's ongoing series *In Our Veins* began as an examination about animals and the natural world. That was years ago, and today the series continues as Guidry reinvents her series and continues to explore animals and animal welfare. "It's been ongoing for a long time," she says, "and I'm not sure it will ever be finished."

The artist, who lives and works in Lafayette, Louisiana, is now using *In Our Veins* to tell stories about wildlife in a surreal world where the animals don't just have metaphoric connections to the world around them, but literal connections as their skin, bones and appendages are painted onto and into human figures, other wildlife and plant life.

"I've always had an interest in surrealism, and my work has become progressively more surreal over time. I felt like I had to challenge myself more, and even though I touched on issues involving the natural world and how we were related, I wanted to really delve into more environmental issues and animal welfare issues," Guidry

says, adding that she's a vegan and feels it is her moral obligation to speak on behalf of animals. "I felt like I had to step it up. I basically took my paintings and my personal lifestyle and upped the ante."

For *Sustain*, with a tree's roots serving as heads for five running deer, Guidry removed the heads to preserve the anonymity of the animals, but to also connect the deer to the natural world in a unique way. "By removing the faces, or covering them, does that make these creatures any less meaningful without faces? I wanted to ask that question to anyone who is viewing the piece. I still see so much life and personality. I still see them as sentient beings," she says. "I also wanted to show how life was all interrelated. If you remove one, it's a domino effect."

Like *Sustain*, *Integral* also grafts the natural world directly onto the bodies of wild animals, in this case a herd of black horses, light shimmering off their inky coats. In both pieces the artist paints her subjects on a white field, as if on display outside of their natural habitats. "It's a great way to emphasize my main subjects, and it forces viewers to see things how I've painted them," she says.

In *Dissociate* two horses share a common mane, and in *Consciousness* deer are leaping from a human brain that floats within a skeleton's hollowed skull—both paintings continue to reinforce Guidry's



strong ties to wildlife, and her surreal vision of how they remain connected permanently. "Surrealism allows me to show these strange worlds and the things that influence me and my love of nature," she explains, adding that climate change, habitat loss, oil spills and other issues weigh heavily on her artistic sensibilities. "I am very aware of the world I live in, but I realize I also shouldn't be so stark with everything I do want to give people hope. There is proof we can improve the world—it's not all doom and gloom. I think we can have a very positive impact, and that's something I'm trying to make people aware of inside my work." ●

