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ART

Review: new works at Barrister's Gallery

POSTED BY [D. ERIC BOOKHARDT](#) ON TUE, MAY 15, 2012 AT 2:28 PM

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Trophy Wife by Nikki Crook

These days we hear a lot about the “natural world,” but anyone who has spent much time in Louisiana sees aspects of nature that stretch the meaning of the word and provide fodder for the imagination. These paintings by Nikki Crook, Amy Guidry and Monique Ligons further the notion that dreams and fantasies may be the last vestige of wild nature in the modern psyche. Crook’s elegantly painted female nudes celebrate the link between the wild world and the dream world in works like *Trophy Wife* (pictured), featuring a darkly veiled woman offering a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a deer skull in the other. In *The Hunter*, a shapely if bloody young woman with a raccoon skin shawl draped across her head and shoulders confronts us with a skinned carcass in her outstretched arms, and *Silent Forest* features a bloody rabbit and an owl with a baby doll face — all of which suggest the female, regardless of species, may be the deadliest gender, at least some of the time.

Lafayette artist Guidry juxtaposes human and animal symbolism in weirdly surreal ways that are especially effective in works like *Synergy*, in which a human head emerges from the earth with blood vessels below like the root system of a tree. In others, wolves’ heads minus bodies roam the badlands like specters, suggesting the real predators may have moved on, perhaps to Wall Street. As with Crook, notions of interdependence and transference are implicit. Monique Ligons’ intricately baroque sci-fi style paintings extend the fantasy realm into the far reaches of the imagination in truly wild images where humanoid insects reenact Biblical scenes ranging from the Crucifixion to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. While not yet household names, all three artists are increasingly accomplished, and their extraordinary imaginations, deftly transposed to paint on canvas, make this dramatically offbeat show very appealing for anyone with an appreciation for magic realism.

Through June 2

Visions of the Unnatural World

[Barrister's Gallery](#), 2331 St. Claude Ave., 710-4506

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