

ART OBSERVED

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ANN CRAVEN: "ANIMALS BIRDS FLOWERS MOONS" AT KARMA THROUGH MAY 1ST, 2021

by D. Creahan



Ann Craven, Big Peacock, Again, 2020, 2020, via Karma

Currently at Karma's East Side space in New York, the gallery has brought forth a series of new works by painter Ann Craven, titled *Animals Birds Flowers Moons*. Working between paint and watercolor, the artist's new series of pieces bring together the titular bodies in a series of varying arrangements, displaying bear cubs, peacocks, woodpeckers, and horses as an exploration of graphical nostalgia and its expressive capacity.

Drifting into childhood imagery, a note the gallery refers to as "a provocative new Romanticism," Craven's canvases revel in bold brushstrokes and deep, rich fields of color, granting her figures a vital sense of energy countered by their calm demeanor. The exhibition is populated by an assorted cast of characters; animals, birds, flowers, and moons span the gallery in a range of scales and medias as Craven showcases her ability move her artistic vision across formats and maintain a strikingly consistent sense of thematics and aesthetics. In moving from one space to the next, the viewer enters into the artist's process of revisitation.

Craven refers to her repetitions not as series, but rather as revisitations, expressing her desire to capture images again, and again, and again, and to offer their depiction as a sort of chorus the artist turns to again and again, bringing with it an increasingly vibrant sense of the task at hand.

In each painting the artist superimposes source photographs, her own paintings, and historical works, creating mediated images that feature layers upon layers of referentiality: a collage of the artist's most treasured curios. The motif in *Big Moon (After Pink Full Moon over Quiet Water)*, 2021, 2021, is recorded and replicated with romantic diaristic affection. *Portrait of Two Cardinals (after Picabia)*, 2021, 2021 indicates Craven's admiration of an artist who gave her license to self-express, while its cardinals were inspired by the bird's associations with hope and faith.

The end result are a series of subtle, personal depictions that express a kindred relationship to artists exploring both the natural world, and their place within it, across history. The show closes May 1st.