



ARTS

"Margaux Crump: The Lure" at Women & Their Work

Juxtaposing natural and synthetic materials through the metaphor of the hunt, the artist blurs lines between lust and danger, the repellent and the seductive

REVIEWED BY MELANY JEAN, FRI., JULY 20, 2018





Skinned Knees by Margaux Crump

Margaux Crump's "The Lure" teems with growth. Mounted antlers protrude from all angles, crystal and silicone sculptures erupt from the wall, and lush still-life photographs are infested with insects, both diegetic and corporeal. It borders on repellent, but is ultimately seductive. Crump uses hunting as an extended metaphor to explore dynamics of desire and sexuality. While this metaphor is not novel, Crump stretches it to a hyperbolic point and in doing so avoids triteness.

Deer seek out salt licks to supplement their growth, including that of their antlers, which serve as a tool of sexual selection in their annual breeding rituals. Before the antler calcifies, it is covered in "velvet," a soft layer of skin. In turn, some people seek out deer velvet to supplement their own growth, believing the hormones accelerate healing and promote fertility. (The substance is not FDA approved.) This could produce a strange scenario in which a deer visits a salt lick with aims to increase its desirability to a mate. There, a hunter scores a kill, a kill that, at the right time of year, produces a powdery substance some faraway consumer ingests to increase their own desirability. The peculiar intertwining of animal and human desire is at home in the space, where velvet and bone are present along with functional salt licks.

The lust of the hunt is found in the seductive beauty of Crump's work. Her fascinating textures and materials attract and surprise the viewer: slippery silicone next to rotting flora, smoothed wood and gleaming coal, lace and crystals, all blush and bruise throughout the space. *In Bloom* traps a rotten assemblage of soot, wax, foliage, and silicone "dicklettes" beneath a large glass cloche in the center of the room. Repeat viewers can observe the process of decay. Similarly, a collection of hand-sewn lace panties is splayed on a wall where they shimmer, not from sequins as perhaps first thought, but from encrusted salt crystals, mimicking meat curing techniques.



hang from above, hovering in anticipation over silicone-and-salt appendages. The sculpture *Skinned Knees* pins slick pink testicular bulges to the wall with a crucifying wooden stake. The gleaming silicone folds beg to be touched even as their rupture repulses. In these precarious sculptures, Crump reproduces the trust and vulnerability inherent in sexual encounters.

"In my work, the body is expanded," Crump writes. And it's true, in her work the body morphs into abstractions that reflect experiences of desire and pleasure in dialogue with synthetic and natural stimuli. Her visual vocabulary is tight and coherent, even as it is maximalist, a fetid and orgiastic delight. Crump consistently blurs distinctions between blush and bruise, pain and pleasure, restraint and indulgence, delicacy and forcefulness. She celebrates the potential for all of these to be contained within a single body, even before it comes into contact with another.

“Margaux Crump: The Lure”

Women & Their Work, 1710 Lavaca

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