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Prey and Predators

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Prey and Predators

By

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A Thesis Submitted in the Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
In
Studio Art
Drawing

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

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Prey and Predators

Roberta Zamma Gallarati

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee

Advisor/Chair, Liz Miller

Committee Member, Areca Roe

Committee Member, Mark Bowen

My work in this exhibition focuses mainly on the relationship between Prey and Predators in the animal world. The idea comes from the many documentaries I watch about animals and from the contrasting feeling I have when I see predators preying on their victims. I love the pent-up tension that is created moments before the predator attacks. However, I would stop that moment, because I loathe to see violence. I am aware that nature is ultimately fairer and that there is an underlying balance and sustainability between preys and predators, though. The purpose of killing is not violence or cruelty, but a need to survive. Statistically, in most cases predators fail in their hunting missions.

What I want to represent in my drawings is role changing or the exception to the rule, when the traditional predator becomes a prey and vice versa. In some of the exhibited drawings, the animals are caught frozen in the moment when the attack and the physical contact is happening. However, there is no real unsettling violence and no bloodletting is involved.

The subverted roles offer a new perspective of the Prey and Predator relationship by empowering the traditional prey with the same courage, strategy, and aggressiveness of the traditional predators in a sort of payback for what, by nature, they need to endure. The result is an awkward and humoristic scene. Also, the sizes and scales of the animals are stated unusually in order to provoke a reaction in the viewers, whether a complete satisfaction, smile, uncertainty, fear, pity, or anger.

The animals I draw are generally endangered (the Whooping Crane and the Florida Panther, for example) and critically endangered species (like the Brown Bears). It is a way for me to put them under the spotlight and make people aware that at this point in time these beautiful creatures are still around and if we don't take action to save them, we will lose them forever.

Extinction. It is a scary word. There is no place for hope in the definition of that word. There is no coming back and it is irreversible. Once a species is extinct, it is gone. Forever! This is another concept I am interested in and that I deal with in this exhibition. I dedicated a couple of portraits to two extinct species (the Passenger Pigeon and the Pinta Island Tortoise) and one portrait to one animal in the process of extinction (Hawaiian Snails). To see species vanishing forever, irreversibly, by the hand of humans not only hurts my sensitivity, but it should make us all think about the responsibility we have towards the environment and their creatures.

This is not necessarily a political statement, but my way to spread knowledge, to stimulate the public to research further, to take action, and a way to create and encourage conversation on these topics.

The elements of design that I am more prone to use are texture and values. My line is often gestural: hesitant in some places and vibrant and assertive in others.

The material I use is generally dry media: black and white charcoal, graphite, and pastel. But I occasionally use also India Ink, ball pen, and white gel pen.