

Melissa Miller

Predators and Prey

September 7 – October 12, 2019

Reception for the Artist Saturday, September 7, 5-7 pm

“We are kindred all of us, killer and victim, predator and prey, me and the sly coyote, the soaring buzzard, the elegant gopher snake, and trembling cottontail, the foul worms that feed on our entrails; all of them, all of us.”

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

“If the destruction of animals be hurtful, is not man ...the most noxious and pernicious of all beings?”

The Comte de Buffon, *Historie Naturelle*

“The Anthropocene defines Earth’s most recent geological time period as being human influenced, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other systems processes are now altered by humans.”

The Encyclopedia of Earth

“From eloquent cave paintings to digital art, the representation of nature’s raw drama has been irresistible to artists. Depictions of predators and prey are used to draw analogies between animal and human behavior, record scientific fact, or provide moral and cultural critique. As populations expand, as emissions pollute the air, and detritus saturates land and sea, our human role as predator takes on new meaning. Billions of tons of plastic in the ocean, melting glaciers, and vanishing species generate an urgency and angst that I seek to understand and address through art.

For the past five decades I have relied on allegorical representation of animals to tell stories of human dilemmas, cultural and personal anxieties, aspects of change and transition, and my awe and respect for nature and its inhabitants. I have borrowed attitudes and positions from both Western and Eastern historical art sources, experimenting at different times with romanticism, anthropomorphism, and naturalism. My more recent portrayals of predator and prey are rooted in actual circumstance and observable reality. As a result, I understand my current narrative position as akin to that of a reporter. Some interplay is subtle: creeping suburbs or trash waving from fence lines. Other signs are as blatant as bloodshed and death.

All my works involve ongoing negotiations around representation, formal abstract interests, and both the possibilities and limitations of different media. My love for paint—its traditions and varieties of expression—continues to enchant and challenge me. I also am expanding my range of materials to include clay, metal, wood, papier-mâché, and more, in hopes of broadening my dialogue between subject and media, learning new skills, and keeping the hinges of an aging brain well-oiled.”

Melissa Miller

Nationally acclaimed for her imaginative allegorical paintings of animals and nature, Melissa W. Miller is an iconoclastic artist who has worked outside of prevailing artistic styles and movements since the mid-1970s. Widely known for paintings using wildlife behaviors as metaphors for human observations and dilemmas, she has created recent work in a variety of media that focuses on the harmful ways humans are altering the environment and endangering animal habitats. She has exhibited work at major museums in America and was the first native-Texan female artist to be included in the prestigious Venice Biennale, Whitney Biennial, and Corcoran Biennial.

Miller has received numerous honors including three National Endowment for the Arts fellowships and an award from the Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation. She was selected "Texas State Visual Artist of the Year" by the Texas Legislature and has also received awards from the Dallas Museum of Art, the Art League of Houston, the Dallas Visual Arts Association, and the National Council of Arts Administrators. Her work has been collected by prominent museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; the National Museum of Women in the Arts; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Dallas Museum of Art; and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Miller lives and works in Austin, Texas.

Melissa Miller: Predators and Prey will be on view at Moody Gallery September 7 - October 12, 2019. A reception for the artist will be held Saturday, September 7 from 5-7 pm. An exhibition brochure will be available.