

REVIEWS/Helen A. Harrison

# Hunting in the Wilds of Imagination

## 'The Trophy Room'

Parrish Art Museum, 25 Job's Lane, Southampton, (631) 283-2118. Through May 15.

Coming from a long line of market gunners and baymen, the sculptor Michael Combs might be expected to advocate recreational hunting and fishing. Instead, his installation is a sardonic parody of these pursuits that once were survival skills, as well as his family's livelihood, but that have come to represent what is known as "blood sport."

Mr. Combs's "Trophy Room" mimics the masculine environments created by big-game hunters as testaments to their prowess. Cordoned off from the rest of the museum by a curtain of camouflage netting, the room bristles with antlers, horns and hides, deliberately evoking Theodore Roosevelt's den at Sagamore Hill, where the souvenirs of his numerous expeditions are displayed.

But amid the welter of taxidermy, rustic furniture and period artifacts are objects that explore the dark side of so-called sportsmanship. "Big Game," a stuffed deer head clad in zippered black leather, cloaks the trophy in the classic garb of sadomasochism, a motif echoed in several game-bird effigies. Sensuous carvings resembling elephant tusks and the long necks of decapitated swans are studded with knobs, further eroticizing the theme of violent conquest.

A pair of children's riding toys — a goose on rockers and a swan on springs — extend the metaphor of cruelty masquerading as amusement. Their necks pierced by handles, the creatures seem to writhe in agony, a far cry from the innocent playroom hobby horse.

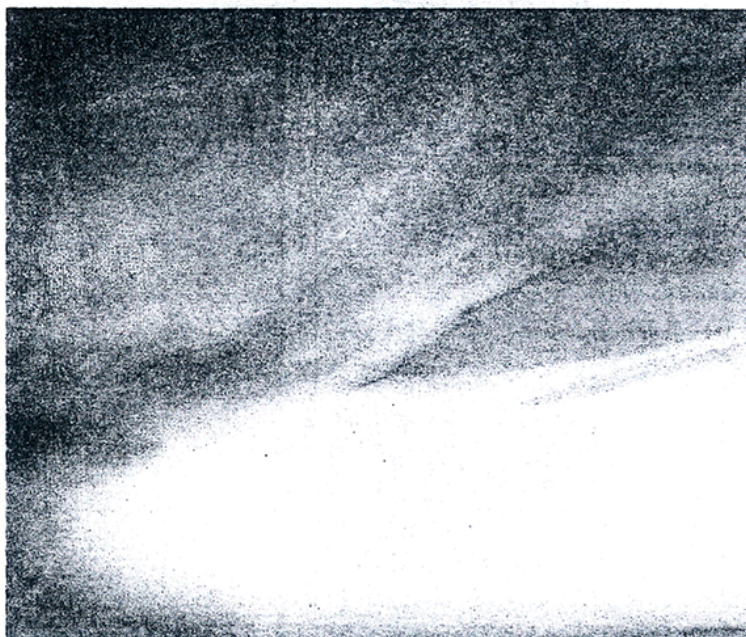
Apart from some fishing tackle and a few boxes of shotgun shells, the hunter's weapons are conspicuously absent. No firearms, real or simulated, are on display. This somewhat blunts the installation's impact, because the guns themselves are potent phallic symbols.

## 'In Process'

Carriage House, Islip Art Museum, 50 Irish Lane, East Islip, (631) 244-5402. Through May 8.

Of the three resident artists invited to use the carriage house this winter, two have more or less carried on their usual work in the new setting. The third, Megan Cump, has responded creatively to the character of her surroundings.

Ms. Cump's photographs, staged in the adjacent greenhouse, exploit the glass



structure as both a barrier and a window to the outside world. Several of her prints incorporate small photographs enclosed in plastic bags that have apparently been placed on the glass. Shadowy fragments float like displaced apparitions, conflating the interior and exterior environments and blurring the boundary between the two realms.

In the carriage house, Dennis Leder and Jeffrey Allen Price have adapted various rooms as display spaces.

Mr. Leder's gouache paintings on paper, based on deconstructed letters and numbers, hark back to the geometric abstractions of Stuart Davis and Ralston Crawford. His wall-mounted welded steel sculptures extend the linear imagery into the third dimension and cast looping shadows that play counterpoint to the room's striped wainscoting. Historical precedents notwithstanding, their jazzy formalism is masterfully realized.

Mr. Price, known for his obsession with potatoes, has transformed one room into a collection of spud-related artifacts, highlighted by a Food Network video that documents his zany potato-themed events, including potato golf, potato croquet and full-body potato mashing.

Lower in carbs but equally crammed with visual overload, the adjacent gallery is literally papered with drawings that reference

## ON VIEW

Michael Combs's installation at the Parrish Art Museum, right; Ruth Sharton's painting "Crimson Sunset II," at Omni Gallery, left; and Dennis Leder's gouache painting "Islip Drawing No. 3," at the Islip Art Museum.



his other preoccupations, from cats to the detritus of consumerism. Where the fun leaves off and the serious social critique begins is a matter for conjecture.

## 'Breath of Light'

Omni Gallery, 333 Earle Ovington Boulevard, Uniondale, (631) 589-3093.

With the sky as inspiration, the five artists here interpret its changing atmospheric effects in subjective, often poetic terms.

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