

GALLERY HOP AROUND TOWN WITH PATRICIA WAKIDA

Metamorphosis

by Patricia Wakida

Kin

Frey Norris Gallery

456 Geary St, San Francisco, CA

94102

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Dana Harel's new graphite works on paper ask what kinship lies between man and other animals through a series of silvery black images that wrestle out the meaning to the riddle. Her drawings of hands poised in stages of metamorphosis are infused with a gorgeous, naked violence that reminds one of the feral necessity of being human, to use the hand to procure one's food and substance. Yet the detail in which she demonstrates the difference between say thumb and claw reveals a certain vulnerability to our physiology. Is it really true then, that the dominant hand truly dominates nature?



Luxuriantly hand-worked and drawn to the scale of the species the body cleaves to (thus, an enormous drawing of two hands signifying the silhouette of an elephant, or hands splayed to the span of a falcon, feathers webbed between the fingers)— the drawings hover eerily between mythology and nightmare. There are a number of astonishing images here to haunt the mind: a whole rabbit swallowed by an extended arm, its head outlined in taut skin just below the elbow, hands transformed into a crocodile, choking down a feathered victim. There are references in the exhibition notes to the positioning of the hands to traditional shadow puppetry, without the use of light and shadow. This metaphor for theater in the work can be further extended to Ovid's Greek tales of consequences, where the origin of man and animal, our kin, is traced. The paper itself was extraordinary, allowing impossibly fine lines of graphite to map rough, intimate patches of dermis, the knob of a terrapin shell or striation of a tusk with incredible detail. Ms. Harel came to drawing through architecture, and her exquisite handle of line and the precision of her draftsmanship are both evident.

The exhibition features work completed within the last year, and is accompanied by a catalogue, with an essay by architect Paul Woolford of Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum, Inc.

--Patricia Wakida

All images courtesy Frey Norris Gallery and the artist

Circus ranivorus (detail), 2009, graphite on paper, 96 x 72 in.

Crocodylus niloticus, 2008, graphite on paper, 46 x 62 in.

Elephas maximus, 2008, graphite on paper 96 x 72 in.