



DANIEL DUTKA

Julie Joyce's powerful lithographs get down to the bare bones of the matter.

Menacing metaphors

by
Donna Lypchuk

Julie Joyce's latest exhibition of lithographs, *6 Animals, 3 Kartoons, and a Boat*, is a sort of story-book lesson on how to be irrepressibly cheerful about things that are irredeemably macabre. It is about the horror of being an adult and having all your childhood nightmares come true. It is about moral darkness and the ambiguity we all suffer as human beings as we try to determine whether or not that little furry thing that we thought we saw huddled in the corner is a cute little mouse or a rat with fangs.

The fantastic creatures that fill the Captain's log of Joyce's latest voyage into that inner space between the two temporal lobes of the human brain are naively realized. Fuzzy little creatures and stick figures are loosely scrawled, loners beneath dark inky skies that resemble fingerpainted smears or permeated with blots of polka-dots reminiscent of the temporary retinal effects you get from staring at a bright light for too long.

Although Joyce's prints mimic the sort of brash and bratty enthusiasm one normally associates with the kind of art

you tape to the fridge this is just a posture that enables her to get down to the "bare bones" of the matter. Just what is it that is eating away at the moral fibre of society? It is the same void, sense of white space that eats away at Joyce's delicately scrawled lines, her semi-realized detail, her amorphic decoration — the degeneration of the image itself as it is peeled off the press.

Despite their regressive posture, these lithographs contain many references to the historical function of printmaking as well as a sophisticated and self-possessed sense of what is perceived as sexual in art. Almost all of the references are half-realized studies of bugs, flowers, musculature structures, animals and all manner of detail that you would normally identify with traditional medical illustration. And in terms of storybook illustration, Joyce is Lewis Carroll gone bonkers.

Joyce's little girls wear nice dresses but they have Mexican death heads for skulls. Her 'walrus' has long, obscene pink teeth, and is stranded in the sheath of his own skin in his cove. And Joyce's "Bawling Baby" is Edvard Munch's scream gone obscene; an open yawling mouth with an angry red blaze of colour for a glottis that is funny but profoundly

disturbing at the same time.

Some of the pieces in the show are more winsome, such as "Hell's Half Acre", which depicts a butterfly, a venous multicoloured creature flying in outer space towards a planet that could be Mars or a post-mortem version of the Earth.

Then there are the animals, "The Bear", "The Capabara", "Taristier", "Bats", which all depict fuzzy little creatures, their normally friendly and familiar faces blasted from recognition by some form of child-like abstraction and adding to the sense of menace that identifies this show.

A very powerful piece in the show is a print titled "Death Goes Shopping", in which Joyce depicts, with smoky white lines in deep blue space, a lady in pseudo-Victorian dress with a cavernous looking skull for a head, bruises of colour for eyes and T.S. Eliot's "crooked pin" for a smile.

With *6 Animals, 3 Kartoons, and a Boat* Joyce has created a series of powerful metaphors for a study of the relationship between sex and death, will and fate, the beautiful and the ugly.

**6 ANIMALS 3 KARTOONS,
AND A BOAT**

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Until Nov. 4