

Venomous Cabbage and Other Demands Satisfied

May 31st, 2014 - Seth Orion Schwaiger

GrayDUCK gallery reopened May 2nd at its new location on East Cesar Chavez in Austin. Leigh Anne Lester's exhibition Venomous Cabbage and Other Demands Satisfied is an ambitious show of sculpture and drawing that fills the expansive new space.



Lester's new works toy with classical botanical drawing, coming close to falling prey to the lures of that historical genre. There have been many failed attempts to justify the seductive style within contemporary art, but such attempts mostly rehash the appeal of these historical drawings without adding new content, and without the impetus of recording new discoveries that compelled the original artists.



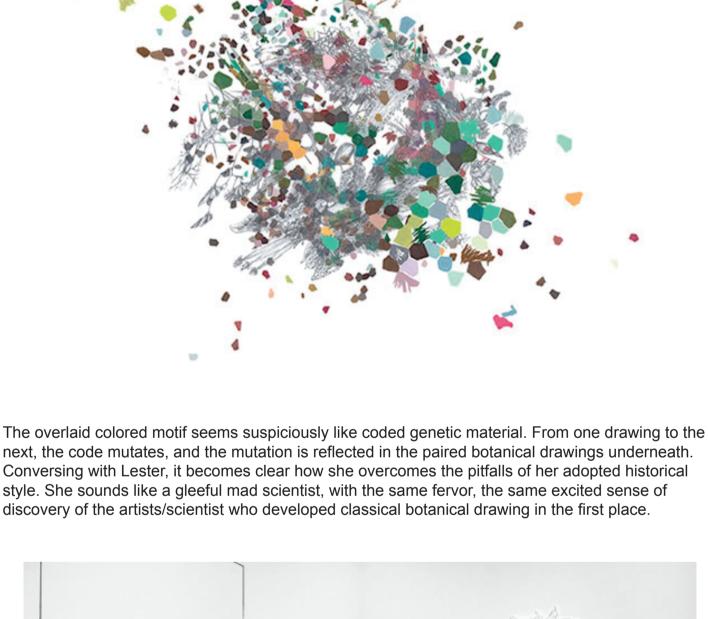
imbalance, yet undeniably calculated. Her subject matter follows suit. Part Punnett square, part Oryx and Crake, Lester touches on hybridization and genetic modification, an increasingly pertinent subject.

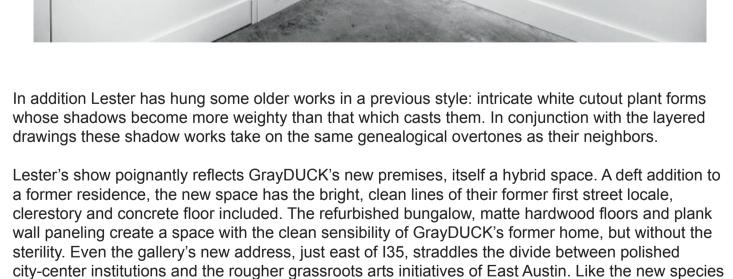
Working on semitransparent substrate, Lester depicts improbable plant adaptations, the products of multiple species spliced and grafted together to create complex tangled forms. Superimposed one on top of the next, the deepest layers become barely visible. The layered structure suggests genealogy,

one species passing some of its traits on to the next. In many of the works, inexact interlocking

Lester, however, bucks the trend. Her works are undeniably more than a rehash of traditional source material. Lester's compositions and palette are contemporary – that is, daring, unique, flirting with

shapes of varied color stretch over the plant forms without paying heed to the plant's shape or borders, obstructing the careful line drawing, and making the drawings seem as though they are made of multiple separate compositions. The detail and complexity of each layer makes viewing them individually impossible. The layers separate and meld together, separate and meld together again in unending rhythm.





in Lester's drawings and sculpture, gallerist Jill Schroeder has adapted and spliced together multiple success strategies, hedging GrayDUCK's bets in an environment formerly unfriendly to commercial

contemporary art galleries.



Lester also presents A Large Turf (after Albrecht Durer), an exciting sculpture from 2010 anchored to the old wood floorboards. Using clear, unblemished materials like plastic, plexi, and synthetic

threads. Lester manipulates art historical source material into a convincing, and somehow

an immersive installation, increased in scale to form an exhibition on its own. As it stands, it is a valuable facet to a strong symbolic show for GreyDUCK's new hybrid space. Venomous Cabbage and Other Demands Satisfied is as satisfactory as its title implies. The exhibition does the gallery space justice and shows the prolific artist's winning combination of conceptual rigor and honed craft.

intimidating mutation. I couldn't help but wish this compelling work was taken a few steps further into

Texas.

Seth Orion Schwaiger is an artist, curator, and critic based in Austin, Texas and Glasgow, Scotland.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Harris Photography and GrayDUCK gallery.

Hurry! Venomous Cabbage and Other Demands Satisfied at GrayDUCK Gallery closes June 1st. Gallery hours are Thursday-Saturday 11-6pm and Sunday 12-5pm. 2213 E. Cesar Chavez, Austin,