

Kate Clark "Perfect Strangers"

November 20, 2008 - January 3, 2009

Opening Reception: November 20, 6-8 pm

Claire Oliver Gallery is proud to present "Perfect Strangers", an exhibition of new large scale sculptures by Brooklyn based artist Kate Clark. Exploring the margins between reality and myth, Ms. Clark's work is a synthesis of human and animal. These creatures are true to life in size and pose, believable however impossible to comprehend as authentic. Mortal faces mirror safety, gentility and cultivation, yet Clark leaves visible the seams in her works, reminding the viewer that the exotic and wild has been undone to construct her striking portraits. The artist asks us to embrace contradiction and question man's uncertain relationship with an underlying violence sheathed just beneath a guise of control.



Bear / 27 x 44 x 21 inches
mixed media sculpture: organic & synthetic materials

As Ian Tattersal wrote in his book *Becoming Human: Evolution and Human Uniqueness*, human features have metamorphosed into a demonstrative, smooth skinned, hairless face which has allowed for an enormous range of universally understood expressions. The ability to read outrage, fear, sympathy and even the subtlest of emotions, has helped humankind to create a civilized culture based on trust in others through these universally understood expressions. Perhaps Clark's creatures are evidence of the human condition, striving to prove an enlightend existence yet undoubtedly of wild origin. These work's sympathetic faces and those tinged with anger, regret or seductiveness question what it is to be human.



Gemsbok / 52 x 24 x 22 inches
mixed media sculpture:
organic & synthetic materials

As with the works of Kiki Smith, Ms. Clark's realm of artistic investigation and discovery concerns its elf with the natural world and unnatural forms: humanist themes of the enduring yet fragile nature of life. Even her most jarring works are composed with a subtle aesthetic sensibility, and an acute sense of form. Clark's animals stay in the background as a symbolic force representing all that we feel about wild animals, yet we do not worry about them as reality. With gentler approach to false history and moral outrage than the Chapman Brothers, Clark's interest is not in futuristic science fiction, but in a discussion about our current state of existence. A human face and head connote a hominid brain, therefore associating intelligence, compassion and reason with the body of a brown bear, a gazelle, and a coyote; the artist asks us to appreciate the animal world not as ferocious, instinctive and simple creatures, but as complex, loving, intelligent and social beings.

Ms. Clark's work has been exhibited at the Islip Art Museum, the Hudson D. Walker Gallery and the Cranbrook Art Museum. Her sculpture has been written about in the New York Times, the Yale Daily News, and the Detroit Free Press.

Public transportation to the gallery

Take C or E train to W. 23 St., walk west to 10 Ave., then walk 3 blocks North to 26th street & 1/4 block west

OR Take any north/south local train including C, E, 1, 9, F, V, N, R, W or 6 to the W. 23 St. stop, & take the M23 bus west to 10th Ave. then walk 3 blocks North to 26th street & 1/4 block west **OR** The M11 bus stops on 10th Ave. between W. 25th & W. 26th Streets.