

Rain Harris

The theatrical nature of Rain Harris's art work evokes museum dioramas designed to recall a time and a way of life inaccessible to modern civilization. In some ways, Harris works as a chronologist of time past, cataloguing mineral, flora, quality of light, and information long forgotten. Her studies—delicate floral sculptures frozen in a heat activated resin—also reference the fallen world that will come hot on the heels of our destructive society. In her collaboration with Kyle Triplett, she constructs outdoor scenery to situate a model in a false environment. The collaborating duo used found and leftover materials to substitute the real thing, sometimes painting a textured object by hand to invite the look and feel of natural greenery. Weary models recline in the environments, interacting with the false gardens and plains. Models, Harris admits, are difficult for her to incorporate. “Once you put a human being in art, it carries this whole new weight. I’m still not entirely comfortable with it.” But in the collaboration with Triplett, she discovered what new layers the human figure could add.

Harris studied cake decoration before working as a ceramic artist. Decoration has always been part of her practice, and Harris took the concepts a step further when she honed in on her specific style. Morbid excess, decay, and biological absurdities appear as themes in the ceramic work—not something one would typically see atop a multi-tiered dessert. Harris leaves us suspended between the desire to consume and the desire to reject, especially when the work is halted somewhere in its natural cycle. Here is the common thread in all her work: capturing the pinnacle moment when beauty is most impressive in the natural world, and then stunting the process before what is beautiful begins to rot. For flowers and fondant, this raises questions about how much control we have over time and its many assaults on perfection.

In *Liminal Prelude*, a young woman rests her head on a bed of black petals, backlit by a blue sky contained in a light box. A quiet conversation develops between the light box image and the platter of coal black flowers, now physically removed from the photo in which it appears.

Forgotten Highway conjures a similar relationship between set and photograph as the pastoral image in the light box glows above an empty, darkened road. We are subjected to the changing moods and tones experienced within the space of these pieces, just as if we are watching the action unfold between actors on a stage. There is a palpable sinister quality to *Liminal Prelude* and *Forgotten Highway*, not just for the dark tones and worried expression on the model, but for the kind of world they evoke. Only the pile of black flowers remains to remember a time when the sky was blue. A single billboard advertises a carefree landscape, offering a visual oasis on the unknown road. It feels like Harris is trying to warn us of something, perhaps an encroaching force in nature, a penetrating darkness that will not be—cannot be—contained for long.

- Annie Raab