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Arts Warehouse Goes “Pink” In Latest, and Wryest, Exhibition

By John Thomason January 13, 2023

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The color pink is rife with contradictions: It has symbolized the feminist and anti-feminist, blithe innocence and fierce activism. Its pale, neon and candy-coated variants conjure everything from flamingos and sponbills to antacid medication. Many of these associations are present in Arts Warehouse’s recently unveiled exhibition “Pink,” a wide-ranging multimedia group show curated by artists Dana Donaty and Renee Phillips.

While there are certainly politics and social commentary undergirding many of the pieces in “Pink,” the exhibition’s most frequent denominator is humor. Seldom do I laugh out loud in an art gallery, but here, I could count these instances on more than one hand.

Sculptor Caitlin Frown, with her ironic surname, is the show’s wryest jester, and is responsible for its funniest subversions of everyday life. “The Ladies Room” is a room-size installation shrunken into a miniature mockup. The pink-walled restroom offers a parody of society’s idea of femininity, but it’s also a deceptively scuzzy place: Look closely at this voyeuristic model, and ants and spiders scurry about.



“Melting” by Caitlin Frown

Frown’s “Melting” is a photograph of a hand clutching an ice cream cone whose confection, in the shape of a bloated humanoid figure looking not unlike the 45th president of the United States, drips itself into oblivion under the hot sun. Then there’s Frown’s “Opossums Love to Gossip,” in which the sculpted title animal, a beastly yenta of sorts, dons an old-lady nightgown, chatting on the phone in her old-lady abode, with old-lady trinkets gathering dust on shelves. This David Lynchian set piece is a satire so oblique in its absurdity that I can’t really place why it’s so effective –it’s just hilarious.



“Can we talk about the elephant in the room” by Diane Arrieta

Other highlights take the form of larger-scale installations, and rooms within rooms. Diane Arrieta’s absurdist “Can we talk about the elephant in the room” literalizes a metaphor, in which a fluffy pink pachyderm stands conspicuously amid a forest of yellowish trees, looking sheepish and caught unawares. Donaty’s “The Pink Room” is a bravura work of foraging and re-imagining, a hot-pink child’s bedroom that the artist describes as a “shrine-like playground.” Symbols of capitalism and prescribed gender roles fill the space, among them a charm school diploma apparently credited to Donaty from the 1970s, stuffed animals, wigs, unicorn high-heeled pumps, a monkey swinging on suspended hula hoops, and a feminist bookshelf. (One book, spread open on a pillow on the floor, is titled *Men Explain Things to Me*.) In “The Pink Room,” one experiences the full spectrum of pinkness and its implications; it’s sort-of the show’s mission statement condensed into a single, eclectic work.



“Pink Room” by Dana Donaty

Perhaps the most impactful statement piece in “Pink” is TD Gillispie’s “Fort Mishkan,” a tent constructed from Army fatigues. Visitors step inside the tent and encounter a trunk of gold-colored toy guns alongside children’s playthings, like dinosaurs and trucks—a comment, I reckon, on how our culture inoculates our youngest citizens on the everyday acceptability of weapons of war. Overhead, we hear the slicing patter of helicopter blades on the soundtrack, and the room occasionally rumbles with the aftershocks of and nearby explosions. Pink is used sparingly in this war-wreary work, but it’s a powerful and disturbing piece nonetheless.



Melanie Brewer’s “Rose Quartz Weighted Blanket”

Other highlights run an impressive gamut from abstract painting, sculpture, textiles and fabrics to creatively refashioned furniture: Donaty’s “Chair” anthropomorphizes a previously ugly rolling chair with psychedelic, clownlike imagery. Etheard Joseph’s “Perpetual Motion” is a painting of staggering scale, a maximalist abstract color-scape that is as overwhelming as it is beautiful. Melanie Brewer’s “Rose Quartz Weighted Blanket” features the pointed pink crystals populating an intricate tapestry, positioned like monuments on a planet’s undulating surface.

This is just a small sample of the many pieces in this most eye-catching of group exhibitions. Perhaps a few dashes of surrealist whimsy married to a blindingly bright color is just the sort of sugary ambience we can use when starting this new year afresh.

“Pink” runs through Feb. 25 at Arts Warehouse, 313 N.E. Third St., Delray Beach. The gallery is open Wednesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For information, call 561/330-9614 or visit artswarehouse.org.

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