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A Group Show in Detroit Asks, Can Humans and Nature Ever Coexist?

The 'After Industry' exhibition features paintings by Christer Karlstad, sculptures by Willy Verginer, and photographs by Jason DeMarte.

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Unidirectional, Christer Karlstad, 2016, Oil on canvas, 74.75" x 34.25"

As the Trump administration continues to shift public attention away from climate science, the Wasserman Projects gallery space in Detroit is putting on a topical group exhibition that explores humanity's disregard for and attempts to master the natural world. After Industry, which opened yesterday,

features works by Italian sculptor Willy Verginer, Norwegian painter Christer Karlstad, and Michigan-based photographer Jason DeMarte. Together, the artworks provide a creative yet critical discussion of pressing issues like environmental destruction, consumerism, and the effects of mass production.



Cowbirds and Cake Sprinkles, Jason DeMarte, 2016, Archival Print, 40" x 60"

A series of digitally manipulated photographs by Jason DeMarte depict man-made tableaux of flora and fauna that have been interspersed with images of brightly-colored objects, sprinkles, and gumdrops. These images are taken from a series called *Confected*, in which DeMarte suggests a cultural desire to enhance and perfect nature by creating oversaturated and blatantly artificial environments. Through his use of lighting and computer manipulation, DeMarte treats his images of the natural world as we would consumer items: as things that can be improved through augmentation. One image, *Cowbirds and Cake Sprinkles*, depicts two birds perched on an arc of brightly colored wildflowers as rainbow sprinkles fall like rain in the background. Despite these cheerful adornments, ominous grey clouds loom overhead in all of DeMarte's images, imbuing a melancholic tone throughout.



The Dark Side of the Donkey, Willy Verginer, 2016, lindenwood acryl color, 102 x 115 x 38cm



Wasserman Tire, Willy Verginer, 2016, lindenwood, acryl color, 62 x 54 x 15cm

Professionally trained sculptor and woodcarver Willy Verginer creates sculptural multimedia installations that creatively fuse humans and animals with inanimate objects like barrels, tires, and lightbulbs. This collection of freestanding and wall-mounted sculptures creates a series of surreal scenarios devoid of any definite narrative. This ambiguity and outright bizarre display leaves the viewer feeling uneasy and inquisitive. The artist imagines a desolate planet where humanity has lost the tools of industry and is to its own devices. In *The Dark Side of The Donkey*, the artist carefully painted the front half of a donkey sculpture beige, and the back end dark blue, almost grey. In another piece, *Wasserman Tire*, Verginer painted the top region of a car tire bright green,

atop which he placed a pack of white goat figurines. Amongst other things, these works may reveal an effort by the artist to show how industry and its leftovers infect the natural world.



Baptism, Christer Karlstad, 2016, Oil on canvas, 51.125" x 34.25"

The paintings of Christer Karlstad disregard our position atop the food chain and envision a world where animals and humans survive in blissful harmony in the wild. Within these serene landscapes, humans are depicted either nurturing or being nurtured by the animals they once hunted. In one painting, a moose cradles a small human child on its antlers as the couple safely crosses a river. In another piece, *Unidirectional*, a backpacker and a grizzly bear spoon on the side of a mountain. Initially these paintings read like cheerful reworkings of the human condition, reflecting on seemingly plausible relationships with animals. But after spending time with each painting, one can't help but begin to question the psychology behind these scenarios, the serenity of these relationships, and how they're supposed to make you feel.



Five Past Twelve, Willy Verginer, 2016, Lindenwood, acryl color, aluminium leaf, iron, 59 x 148 x 53cm

Gary Wasserman, the founder of Wasserman Projects, writes, “[The artists'] work is both visually compelling and conceptually challenging. And in this particular moment in our history, it seemed right to bring them together to explore artistically subjects that are so relevant and resonant here in Detroit, but also nationally and internationally. This is very much in line with the vision of Wasserman Projects, connecting art to broader ideas and issues and presenting work that is in many ways both global and local.”

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Queen Ann's Candy, Jason DeMarte, 2016, Archival Print, 45" x 30", Edition of 7

After Industry is on view at Wasserman Projects in Detroit through April 7th. For more information on the exhibition, [click here](#).

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