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Jane Margarete: A Honey of a Tangle
Oxymoronic Assemblages
Anat Ebgi
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by Jody Zellen



Chains, locks and hinges made of clay are, in many ways, antithetical to their purpose. How can something designed for sturdiness and security also be fashioned from fragile material? Add in some unsettling scale-shifts and it is these anomalies that make Jane Margarete's installation of large-scale, wall-based ceramics so compelling. Hanging on the gallery walls are giant flying creatures, assembled like puzzle parts from numerous precisely shaped, beautifully detailed and glazed ceramic elements. Margarete combines these forms with commonplace hardware to create evocative sculptures that play with scale while simultaneously defying functionality.

Jam To-morrow, Jam Yesterday, (2022) is a relief depicting a dragonfly with outspread wings that span more than five-feet across. Suspended from both sides of these wings are old fashioned pocket watches (without hands). The watches are threaded through u-shaped hooks and held in place by branch fragments at the top. *Psychically Milked*, 2021 is similarly curious. Here, Margarete installs an oversized gate latch high on the wall. At the top of the latch is a long, light-pink ceramic chain almost reaching the floor from which a white butterfly dangles, hovering above an open bear trap. The trap is attached to a white handle on the wall that supports a fragment of green chain. Is the butterfly the allure for an absent bear? What is Margarete's interest in security, trapping and capture?

The combination of utilitarian objects with normally innocuous insects and animals makes for a strange juxtaposition. While Margarete crafts off the shelf devices designed to offer protection and safety, she transforms them into playful armatures for her animal and insect forms. While the works faithfully reproduce items one could find in a hardware store, Margarete makes them into something offbeat, unpredictable and surreal.

The oxymorons in Margarete's assemblages have an ironic humor. *Easy Daisy*, 2021, for example, combines a human-scaled white studded collar with a huge antique pink padlock. *Miserable with Carefulness*, 2022 is the centerpiece of the exhibition. It is a nine-foot wide butterfly with black wings dotted with yellow spots that houses a chain of fruit—a lemon, strawberry and grapes—as well as a basket of what appears to be teeth and an upside-down flame hanging from one of its wings. *I Must Have Missed You*, 2021 is a relief in the shape of an "X" comprised of two birds etched with lines depicting eyes, beaks and feathers. One bird's head attaches to its neck with a hinge, suggesting it could swing up and down, yet it is firmly held in place by nails. Where the birds' bodies overlap, Margarete has gathered a dark gray chain around an anchor onto which are hooked three small white roses.

The unusual combination of representations of living creatures and hardware creates a fascinating dichotomy and Margarete explores these and other dualities within the works. Be it the relationship between freedom and capture, hard and soft, fragile and strong, large and small, her pieces invite viewers to ponder fantastical relationships and to celebrate both her imagination and her skills of fabrication.

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