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Adonna Khare: "In the Clouds" at Lora Schlesinger Gallery

by jody zellen



The Screaming Bear, 2013, carbon pencil on paper, 92 1/2" x 36 1/2"

When Adonna Khare puts carbon pencil to paper magic occurs. Khare has a facile hand and an amazing ability to render. The animals that dominate her works often exhibit qualities and emotions beyond their animalness. Her small works are spacious and airy, whereas her large pieces are covered edge to edge with a menagerie of creatures. Khare's animals are like characters in an evolving story; they start out as one thing in small sketches and later appear transformed in larger works where they play a more central role in the narrative. For example, *Goldfish and Balloons* (all works 2013), is a delicate drawing in which five balloons lift a fish up toward the top of the paper away from a porcelain tea-cup and a tiny teddy bear tied to an object with the word "almost" inscribed on it. Balloons lifting fish, as well as birds, also appear in *Polar Bears*, a 92-by-72 inch drawing. In this highly detailed work three large bears frolic among a cluster of balloons. While in real life their sharp claws would surely cause the balloons to pop, Khare dismisses reality creating a composition jam-packed with small and large animals, all of whom coexist symbiotically amongst tornado ridden skies.

Khare has spoken about the works as metaphors for the things that have happened in her life--the joys as well as losses. She fashions her love and observations of nature into magical stories where chimps and bears compassionately huddle together along with animals that could be their meals. In *Polar Bears*, close observation reveals a stitched together wound on a seemingly virile bear embracing another bear hugging a stuffed Teddy. While poignant and emotional, the works are not without humor. In *Kudo with Two Chimps*, a small giraffe sports a unicorn's horn, a penguin wears a studded collar with the word "flood" engraved in a dog-bone-shaped charm and a small lizard-like creature swings from an antelope's horn. Although arrows have pierced the antelope's ears and his mouth is sewn shut, he does not shed a tear. Tears do flow in *The Screaming Bear*, a work made during the passing of the artist's father. It's impossible not to feel pain and a sense of doom as the bear howls into the threatening sky.

Khare has a vivid imagination and the ability to transform the observable world into fantasy, rendering it with exactitude and compassion. Her biographical works use animals to tell stories about life, death and above all, the importance of connection.