

“Prime Candidates”

Duke and Battersby, Scotty Slade and Andrew Thompson

18 June – 9 July, 2011

Everywhere you look in Detroit these days you see soiled, tattered shopping bags hanging from tree branches - and that's just in the art galleries. There's a whole urban "dirtgeist" seemingly energized by both the dystopian and utopian qualities of the city, but ultimately leaning towards the natural. The show, "Prime Candidates" examines this tendency in a more universal context by presenting work that may come from unexpected directions, but which at its core deals with complex issues of human desire and expectations of the natural world.

Background

Scotty Slade's work deals with the dwindling proportion of the information we receive that comes from nature and specifically the impact of this on a society's physical and mental health. Heavily influenced by the work of Edward O. Wilson, and the Biophilia hypothesis, it questions whether society's tendency to ever greater abstraction is reaching a tipping point from which it won't return. The physical materials and processes he uses - bones and hides from Eastern Market slaughterhouses, ripped or torn trees etc - offer little comfort to the viewer but seem to point to a level of experiential commitment necessary to stay sane and healthy in today's world.

Andrew Thompson works with discarded objects in quantities and configurations which imply that circumstances are spiraling out of control. Having grown up on the edge of Tornado Alley and then relocating to Auto Alley after it began to revert to nature, he searches for meaning in the symbolic language used to define regional place and individual identity.

Canadian artists Duke and Battersby create contemporary fables which "*propose that existence is abject, farcical and messy. The artists employ live action footage, scavenged images and simple animations to create episodic structures that evince a simultaneously utopian and dystopian world-view. Duke and Battersby do not shy away from dirty stuff, or creepy stuff, or stuff that makes people uncomfortable. You could say that the dirty, the creepy and the uncomfortable are their milieu. But don't get the impression that it's gloomy: quite the opposite. It's moving, tender, watchable and often very, very funny*". Expect video work and tricked-out animal sculptures.