

NEWS RELEASE

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Caitlin Gill and Bridgette Guerzon Mills Display *M(Other) Nature* Mixed Media at Adkins Arboretum

Nature is far from passive in the artwork of Caitlin Gill and Bridgette Guerzon Mills. In their joint show, *M(Other) Nature*, on view in the Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center through December 23, dreams, nightmares and reality intertwine as two roosters decorated with dried flowers and intricate cut-outs of leaves attack one another in Gill's "Cock Fight" and a bare, silhouetted tree sprouts up from the delicate embroidery of a vintage baby's gown in Mills's "Baptism." There will be a reception to meet the artists and learn more about their work on Sat., Nov. 11 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The two Baltimore area artists had never met but when they got together at Mills's studio to plan the show, they found they have a lot in common.

"We're drawn to similar materials," Mills said. "I found it interesting that we both use found natural materials in our work."

"A big inspiration for us is materiality, texture, and nature," Gill agreed. "We both seem particularly drawn to found objects, lace, insects and nests, and there's a lot of exploration with textiles."

Both artists have always felt a strong connection with nature, particularly its feminine creative power. The title of their show, *M(Other) Nature*, refers to our culture's contradictory feelings about nature, that while we celebrate its beauty and creativity, we feel separate from it, as if we are something other than nature, and so have no qualms about exploiting its resources.

Both Gill and Mills explore the life-giving aspects of nature, underscoring their mutual interest in its feminine qualities by using materials associated with women—cloth, lace, doilies, and thread.

Gill said, "Mother Nature as a metaphor is contingent on the feminine ability to create life. I think the need for knowledge as a mode of control and dominance is something nature has endured, similarly to women, so for me, this is an exercise in reclamation and liberation."

Visitors may remember Mills's site-specific sculptures in the Arboretum's forest from several of the *Outdoor Sculpture Invitational* shows. A Master Naturalist, for last summer's show, she created a large book with nuts, seedpods, bark and moss stitched onto its cloth pages that explored trees' role in the

health of the forest. Continuing this exploration, her materials for this show include similar found materials as well as cloth, lace, photo transfers of trees, birds and insects, paint, encaustic and actual hand-stitching so that her artworks bridge the real and the imagined. These are gentle works, lovingly made and carrying a sense of mystery and melancholy.

“I aim to reveal the fragile imperfection of life,” she explained. “Stitching in my work also references the universal idea that we are all connected.”

Like Mills, Gill explores the contrast between vulnerability and the power of the life force but with an often disquieting focus on the physical experience of exploitation. A pale grub, part painted and part collaged, curls up alone and exposed on the loose-knit fibers of a sheet of handmade paper, while a beautiful golden-red fox, also a fusion of paint and collage, seems at first glance to be running until you read its title, “Fox, roadkill.”

“The history of animal rights follows a nearly parallel trajectory to women’s rights,” Gill said. “All my work is directly or indirectly about the feminine experience and its relationship to nature and western culture.”

Much as women have historically been required to take passive roles, adhering to rules set by a male dominant society, Gill’s birds, insects and animals are isolated from their natural environments, alone and vulnerable to exploitation. It’s uncomfortable subject matter, but there’s an underlying sense that they possess a strength and resilience that will ultimately help them to survive.

Mills explained, “I think that both Caitlin’s and my work attempts to speak to our connection to the earth and to nature. It’s a fragmented relationship often at odds—natural/unnatural, connected/disconnected, beautiful/grotesque, creation/destruction and life/death. The list can go on and on!”

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Dec. 23 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 100 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org.

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