

amanda barr case of the wolves

Motel is pleased to present the solo exhibition of Amanda Barr (North Carolina), *Case of the Wolves*. In her first showing with the gallery, Barr presents a series of 3-dimensional sculptures. Using materials traditionally associated with craft, such as ceramics and wood, Barr creates concept-driven pieces which revel in humor and (im)possibility, while conveying a deep affection for nature. Her sculptures function as a series of mystical emblems, simulacra of the natural world animated by an oblique narrative. An homage to clay, *Case of the Wolves*, consists of seven sculptural pieces, each of which Barr describes as having its own story. In this respect, Barr anthropomorphizes her work, simultaneously capturing and creating the natural history of her objects.

Titled after a set of ceramic wolf finger puppets ensconced in a walnut carrying case, *Case of the Wolves* engages Barr's fascination with the interplay between viewer and object. The wolf figurines, made both precious and absurd by the context of their case, invite play. Barr initiates this imposition by presenting the briefcase propped open, making the figures readily accessible, rather than protected and guarded by a sterile vitrine. Similarly, "Rock Harp", a working harp connected to an unlikely rock-shaped ceramic amplifier, requires the creative involvement of the gallery visitor to "bring it to life".

Inasmuch as Barr instigates a transaction between her objects and the observer, she is likewise interested in the dynamic process of the artmaking. The shape of each wolf puppet is informed by the characteristics of the raw clay lumps, such that the final piece is a confluence of the artist's manipulation and the clay's own tendencies. "Broken Boobs", a cracked ceramic sculpture of a woman's breasts, becomes artifact when accompanied by a note that alludes to the numerous studio mishaps during its creation. In this respect, Barr's sculptures result from a negotiation between her ideas and the constraints of her media and processes.

Ultimately, Barr's preoccupation with clay exemplifies not just a love affair with the medium but a broader regard for the natural world. Her concern with the natural history of her objects is not limited to their current representational forms, but reflects back to their elemental state, as unformed clay and wood. Pieces such as "Rock Clock" (a ceramic rock with two cigarette butts mounted on clock mechanism), and "Small Dream Mountain" (a miniature ceramic mountain) become both self-referential puns and deeper commentary on the human connection to nature. This reverence for the natural world, combined with a sense of playfulness and wit, are recurring themes for Barr, explored uniquely through clay in *Case of the Wolves*.

BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Barr (b. 1973, Ashland, Oregon) lives and works in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She is a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design (BFA, 1996). Her work has been shown at Guild & Greyshkul (NY, NY), Allston Skirt (Boston), New Image Art (L.A.) and at fairs in Miami and Cologne, among others. Barr is represented by Branch Gallery, Durham, NC.