



Marc Dennis' exhibition Honey Bunny plays upon the harmonious discord of material objects and their associations using the age-old genre of the still life to express contemporary problems. He weaves a silver toy-sized rabbit (an homage to Jeff Koons' balloon works) throughout the exhibition, demonstrating his mastery of capturing reflective sheen to a nearly photographic effect, as well as his penchant for satire. Excess appears to be a running theme, as Dennis plays upon ideas of decadence, indulgence, tenderness, and the American obsession with violence.

His grouping of objects take on compositions informed by popular advertising that have pervaded American popular culture since the latter half of the twentieth century, projecting the requisite glossy material sensuality to that effect. Although this work is best appreciated from a distance, upon closer inspection it is clear that Dennis has paid meticulous attention to the lettering on the firearms depicted. Dennis carefully represented the brand names engraved on the guns, which lends a certain cachet, or commercial sexiness to the weapon. However his paintings also feature the manufacturer's warnings about the objects' use, reminding the viewer of their inherently violent nature.

Dennis' contemporary *momento mori* reference the Dutch Baroque masters through their hyperrealism and direct quotes of well-tread subjects, such as the human skull, highly detailed sumptuous desserts and jewels, and most noticeably the hanging carcass motif. While Rembrandt alluded to Christ's crucifixion in *Flayed Ox* (1655) through his use of somber, ambient lighting, Dennis' *Kingdom Come* (2011) turns this humbled subject on its head by emphasizing its gratuitous objectification. The starkness of the meatpacking floor and the sterility of the room make the work almost journalistic in its depiction and strip it of its holy connotation. In the context of the surrounding works, Dennis achieves a sharp balance between sensuality, desire, and their exploitative consequences.

His juxtaposition of the dead against the living is a running theme is most successfully demarcated by his purposefully stark contrasts. This disparity involves his inclusion of subjects typically associated with innocence and gentleness (kittens, puppies, and stuffed animals), the menacing nature of semi-automatic weapons, and the horror of animal remains. These combinations force the viewer to contemplate the insidious character of desire, which has a tendency to blind the masses using intoxicatingly glossy packaging. One such example is *For Loves Sake* (2011), which depicts a case of handguns on display for a gun show. In this context the guns' political divisiveness and destructive capabilities have been completely neutralized.

Dennis' more subtle works nicely counterbalance his more explicit paintings such as *Biggy Kitty* (2011) in which he channels the union of sensuality and violence common to rap videos. *Little Ways* (2011) reduces a revolver to an embroidered design on a decorative pillow. However, when placed next to an American flag pillow of the same size, the weapon and flag reference the national obsession with violence and its complete desensitization in the mainstream. This sentiment is echoed in the bearskin rug, which has rendered a once menacing beast into a harmless element of the décor. Again, in *Love You Too* (2011), Dennis breaks the commonplace nature of the scene through the subtle appearance of brass knuckles mixed amongst laundry, a puppy, and evidence of recent festivities.

While the photographic realism inherent in his work is intriguing, the most successful element of Dennis' exhibition lies in his observations and less-composed compositions. Juxtaposed against some of his more implausible arrangements, Dennis' work involving groupings of weapons and carcasses in their natural setting develops a stronger, more concrete tie to reality. As an ensemble, it is clear that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.