



December 12, 2011

## ***The New Naturalists:*** contemporary artists interpret the natural world



*Trash eaters*, Amy Stein

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A new exhibition opening at Herron School of Art and Design brings together work in a variety of mediums by 12 contemporary artists who are deeply interested in places where nature and culture meet.

*The New Naturalists: contemporary artists in the realm of natural history*, opens in the Robert B. Berkshire, Eleanor Prest Reese and Dorit and Gerald Paul Galleries with a public reception from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. on January 13 and continues through February 16.

The practice of carefully observing things and phenomena in the places where they are found led naturalist Charles Darwin to arrive at conclusions that have been generating discussion for more than 150 years. Supplanted by specialty and laboratory-based experimentation, naturalists in more recent years had come to be seen as anachronistic amateurs. Pushed to the margins, they became as endangered as some of the species they studied.

Of late, biologists and ecologists have grown increasingly concerned that this swing of the pendulum away from naturalism—which at its core is keen observation—hinders the ability to deeply understand natural systems.

Enter contemporary artists as the new naturalists.

Their work is derived from sustained observation and research. It also reflects a tradition of experimentation in the oldest sense of the word: as understanding derived through direct experience. Biologist David Gilligan describes such artists as “... necessary liaisons between specialists and laypeople, ... interpret[ing] a natural world that is changing perhaps more quickly than we can know.”

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The exhibition includes:

Images from the **Hidden Ecologies Project** by architect **Cris Benton**, microbiologist **Wayne Lanier** and curator **Marina McDougal**, which documents macro- and micro-ecology in San Francisco Bay.

Photography by **Jean-Luc Mylane**, which studies the behavior of specific species of birds based on a prediction of where they will arrive. The resulting photographs can take days, weeks or months to achieve.

Natural history dioramas created and photographed by **Lori Nix**, whose sometimes darkly funny images comment on how we look at the natural world.

Large format, super-high resolution images of moths by **Joseph Scheer**, whose unprecedented work has drawn the attention of biologists.

Staged recreations of documented events, photographed by **Amy Stein**, who chronicles the increasing incursions of wildlife into domesticated spaces, causing us to question what it means to be wild.

Video by **Sam Easterson**, who has shot from small-animal mounted cameras that yield a striking sense of the world from an animate, and even non-animate, point of view.

Video by **Tera Galanti**, who crosses the nature-culture divide with her documentation of the life cycle of the domesticated silk moth, which she has been trying to reverse-breed back to a form similar to its wild ancestors.

Sculptures by **Dalya Luttwak**, which model plant roots to reveal that which is normally invisible.

A ceramic installation by **Gretchen Scharnagl**, which comments on the contemporary problem of bird collisions with buildings.

Slip-cast, *trompe l'oeil* ceramic apples by **Jessica Rath**, which draw attention to the fragility of the now domesticated fruit, serving as an apt metaphor of the place where nature and culture meet.

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Herron Galleries are free and open to the public on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 5p.m. and on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

#### Parking Information

Guests of Herron School of Art and Design should park in the Sports Complex Garage, just west of Herron. Park in the visitor side of the garage and bring your garage ticket to the Herron Galleries for parking validation, courtesy of The Great Frame Up.

Parking in the surface lot requires an IUPUI parking permit.