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In the galleries: Where the wild things are

by Mark Jenkins



A walk in the woods is nothing like a stroll through a gallery; the forest isn't divided neatly, and wild stuff abuts and overlaps. The Arlington Arts Center can't aspire to that sort of organic jumble, but its "King of the Forest: Adventures in Bioperversity" is agreeably unruly. While some of the 14 artists dwell in just one gallery, others skitter here and there. Joan Danziger's jewel-like oversize beetles, made largely of glass and wire mesh, are all over the place. And Krista Caballero and Frank Ekeberg's calls of endangered and extinct birds can be heard both inside and outside the building.

Some regularly exhibited local artists easily fit the concept. Selin Balci makes eerily beautiful, painting-like pieces with mold and other microorganisms; video-animator Jonathan Monaghan contributes a loop in which a polar bear is poached by a certain soft-drink company; and Rebecca Clark depicts animals under threat — including, in this selection, from drones — in lustrously detailed pencil drawings.

Clark cites Renaissance nature studies as an inspiration, and their influence also can be seen in Lisa Crafts's natures-morte videos. The *New Yorker's* approach, however, is less solemn. Her shorts incorporate junk food, industrial pollution and animals with two heads. Among the other videos is Rachel Schmidt's swimming penguin, projected onto a large white circle amid paper icebergs.

David D'Orio and Henrik Sundqvist's buzzing piece highlights human dependence on bees, while other artists turn the tables on the most arrogant of bipeds. Anthony Cervino built a person-size — well, child-size — birdhouse, and printmaker Talia Greene depicts modern-day ruins colonized by tigers, crocodiles and such. She's kidding, but in fact the area around the forsaken Chernobyl nuclear plant in Russia has become a sort of animal refuge. Whether that's bio-salvation or bioperversity remains to be seen.

King of the Forest: Adventures in Bioperversity On view through April 3 at Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. 703-248-6800. arlingtonartscenter.org.