



CREATURE • MAN • NATURE

At Mesa Contemporary Arts

By Amy L. Young

It is such a thrilling feeling when you enter an art exhibition and you can both see and sense, from a distance, that you have only just begun to absorb an array of impressive work. That moment is not common and is nothing if not heady and exciting. You simultaneously want to breathe it in patiently and rush to see its fine details. An even better feeling is when you take the close-up journey of the work and realize that you are dazzled well past that initial blast of excitement. Locally-based artists Carolyn Lavender, Monica Aissa Martinez and Mary Shindell have done an outstanding job presenting a cohesive exhibition, both in themes and talent. *Creature • Man • Nature* explores the artists' thoughts about, and relationships with, self, nature, gender, animals and biology, and it threads together with significant ease.

Lavender's drawings are exceptionally detailed and benefit from her technical expertise. *The Woods* (graphite on prepared paper) is a properly woody, wintery scene that features animals co-existing with

taxidermied animal head, a la the ones ubiquitous in the dens of many homes, placed on the trees that surround them. Their expressions are vital, showcasing their inherent beauty and charm. A subtle starkness the piece exudes also reminds us of our very intense relationship with nature and how it does affect the animals with which we share the land. Her work drips with a palpable tenderness.

Monica Aissa Martinez's work from her *Nothing in Stasis* series of drawing and paintings explores the human form. The striking *Male and Female Torsos* use deep and bold colors to examine the genders. Showcasing the complex inner physical compositions of the male and the female, it is the artist's soulful details that bring emotion to the piece. It creates a pervasive awareness about not only the intensity of one's relationship with self, but also the delicacy of mingling and blending with others.

Mary Shindell's *There Is a Mountain* is an immoderate wall graphic that layers numerous digital drawings for this majestic representation of our own South Mountain. Its size and precision allows it to overshadow the viewer as one looks into it, realistically reminiscent of the undeniable

vastness that parallels a visit to our desert treasures. Shindell's lighted creations hang from the ceiling, setting a warm and inviting tone.

Creature • Man • Nature is a layered and elaborate exhibition that allows you to gently unveil and examine its intricacies, its strong and important messages only benefitting from the pervasive thoughtfulness that permeates the whole. The show runs through April 28. You can read about the exhibition's process at <http://formalandinformal.wordpress.com>. ■

Creature • Man • Nature
Carolyn Lavender, Monica Aissa Martinez, Mary Shindell
Through April 28
Mesa Contemporary Arts
One East Main St., Mesa
www.mesaartscenter.com

Install shot back wall: Mary Shindell "There Is a Mountain" 120" x 300" Large format graphic, digital drawing

Monica Aissa Martinez "Body Male" from the series "Nothing in Stasis" 2012, 96" x 60" graphite, casein, gesso on paper

Carolyn Lavender "Preservation Woods" 2012, Acrylic, graphite on archival foam core (10 panels) 80" x 160"