

“Much-Much”

An exhibition of paper, pictures and patience by Jen Stark

Sometimes you encounter something so unique and interesting that you find yourself staring at it wondering how something like this can be done. Such is the case with the work of Miami-based artist Jen Stark.

This Friday, Jen Stark joins Civilian for her first solo show at the gallery. Hosted in the project space the exhibition entitled “Much-Much” will include her signature cut-paper sculptures; colorful ink drawings; animation; a site-specific mural; and a million other things. And judging by the increasing quality and complexity of Stark’s oeuvre this promises to be an exciting debut.

Without the use of computers, lasers, optics or esoteric instrumentation in their construction, these intricate creations reveal to us how remarkable a simple material like paper can become. Driven by an ardent fascination to push her chosen medium to its limits Stark’s ever more impressive works prompt equal reactions of surprise and dumb awe.

Described by the artist as “mathematically organic colorful paper explosions” her sculptures - at once miniature volcanoes and mesmerizing Technicolor vortex’s - exhibit intelligent and often mind-boggling configurations. Upon regarding them one gets the distinct feeling that they have happened unwittingly upon secret rituals of the natural world. As yet undisturbed by our presence we are blessed to witness them in their private stillness before startled they withdraw from view like exotic snails or reef anemones.

The drawings too have the feeling of being alive. Consisting of intricate scribbles that appear to come directly from the artist’s subconscious these vibrant microcosms combine to form fantastical landscapes populated by harlequin worms, sensitive tendrils and charismatic glyphs. Happily content with life behind glass like creatures in an aquarium they traverse the page in directionless angular shoals.

Adding yet another string to Stark’s bow are stop motion animations in which paper is further imbued with new significance. Often accompanied by light electronic soundtracks, the looped kaleidoscopic films draw viewers through benign wormholes of living color.

At an exhibition of Jen Stark’s one does not so much view work as observe extraordinary behavior in a state of stasis. With surprisingly simple means the artist succeeds in extending our world by venturing a furtive, unspoiled dimension of sentient forms.

Referencing geometry, meteorology and drawing freely from her own inimitable individuality she refines her message with economical yet expounding titles. Often scientifically and biologically dependable they call to mind established truths in nature and fortify our impressions of them with a greater sense of purpose.

Jen Stark is a 2008 recipient of the prestigious South Florida Cultural Consortium’s Visual and Media Artists Fellowship. For more information please visit www.jenstark.com

- Tom Hollingsworth, May 2008