

International Artist-in-Residence *New Works: 11.1*

E.V. Day

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Devon Dikeou

AUSTIN, TEXAS

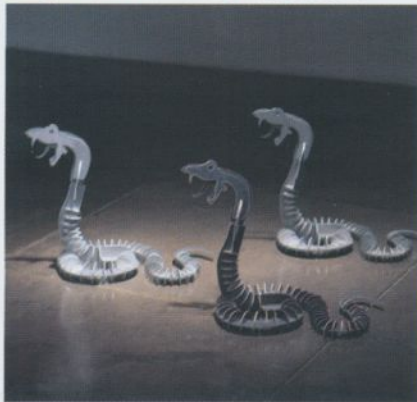
Kelly Richardson

TORONTO, CANADA / NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND



E.V. Day, *CatFight*, 2011. Installation detail. Photo by Todd Johnson

E.V. Day, *Snake*, 2011. Installation detail. Photo by Todd Johnson



There was a distinctive Texas flavor in this year's first cycle of residencies. Elements from the Lone Star state's rich natural and musical history were incorporated into the works of the 11.1 International Artists-in-Residence. New York artist E.V. Day manipulated replica skeletons of prehistoric saber-toothed cats that once roamed the San Antonio area. Austin-based artist Devon Dikeou titled her exhibition after a song by Texas music legend Willie Nelson. And Canadian artist (and England resident) Kelly Richardson featured the supernatural landscape of an ancient East Texas lake in her video installation.

E.V. Day's deconstructive style puts all clothing at risk, from women's undergarments to wedding gowns, Chanel suits, and replica dresses—nothing is safe from the New York artist's "Exploding Couture" technique. Additionally she has utilized unorthodox artistic media including cat skeletons, children's plastic toys, and replicas of animal tongues to touch on femininity and the humor of gender roles.

Saber-toothed tigers, more appropriately referred to as saber-toothed cats, are the primary subject of E.V. Day's expressive tableau, *CatFight*. Continuing her investigation of issues of

femininity through the utilization of garments, accessories, and other objects, saber-toothed cat skeletons tangled in battle serve as metaphor for a power struggle or "catfight" between formidable women fighting over territory or dominance.

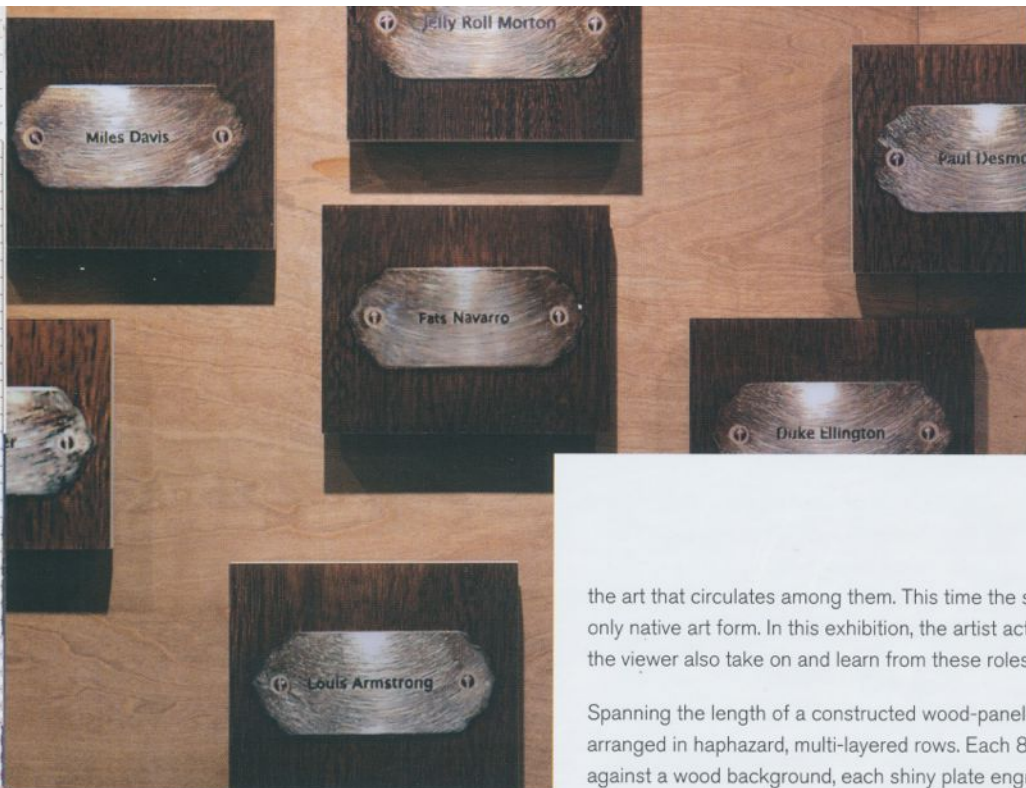
Upon entering the exhibition, the viewer encounters the skeletons of two adult female saber-toothed cats suspended from the ceiling with thick, plastic monofilament lines (commonly used for fishing). These iconic *übermothers* of the animal kingdom are frozen in the midst of an aggressive gesture, where one exerts supremacy over the other. The cats, viewable in the round, loom large. Each figure is ivory in color except for silver leaf adorning their teeth and claws, alluding to accessories that might distinguish a female from a male.

An intriguing synthesis of natural history diorama, boxing ring, and soap-opera catfight, *CatFight* reanimates the bones of an extinct creature to make a strong yet playful comment on contemporary gender stereotypes. The bones take on new significance and meaning: they can be seen as surrogates for actresses pulling hair and scratching at each other over the attention of a lover, or over the jealousy that occurs when one's social standing eclipses another's. Any meaningful spectacle requires the presence of spectators, and the snakes in the exhibition serve as a masculine foil to the felines' feminine association. However the piece is interpreted, it's clear that Day is successful at evoking powerful narratives through her manipulation of objects.

Devon Dikeou is an Austin-based artist, curator, and collector, as well as the editor and publisher of the collaborative curatorial publication *zingmagazine*, which she founded in 1995. The artist's *Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys* continues her ongoing exploration of the complicated relationships among artists, curators, collectors, spectators, and

Devon Dikeou, *Mama Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys*, 2011. Installation view. Photo by Todd Johnson





Devon Dikeou, *Mama Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys*, 2011. Installation detail. Photo by Todd Johnson

the art that circulates among them. This time the subject is jazz, widely recognized as America's only native art form. In this exhibition, the artist acts as curator, critic, and detective, and asks that the viewer also take on and learn from these roles.

Spanning the length of a constructed wood-paneled wall in the gallery are 56 color photographs arranged in haphazard, multi-layered rows. Each 8x10-inch image depicts a metal nameplate against a wood background, each shiny plate engraved with the first and last name of a jazz musician. The photographs, which range from clear and crisp to fuzzy and out-of-focus, are mounted on blocks of stained wood and set behind Plexiglas.

The casual viewer would not easily recognize most of the names on display, many of which are obscure to non-experts in jazz. The only clue to their individual and collective importance is that each was originally memorialized on a metal nameplate, has been photographed, and is re-presented in Dikeou's installation. Only after spotting iconic names such as Miles Davis or Nat King Cole does the viewer begin to understand that the series is comprised of the names of jazz musicians.

Dikeou has further complicated her curatorial authority by inserting a forged nameplate for Sonny Simmons in the exhibition. A friend of the artist and an influential jazz musician, he was not included in the collection of nameplates she found and photographed. Yet an expansive 17x12-foot photo wall mural of his nameplate is installed near the entrance to the gallery. By including and inflating Simmons's name among the jazz greats, Dikeou presents a revised history of the genre. In doing so, she challenges the authority of taste and the apparent rigidity of entrenched and historicized popular culture.

Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys (which takes its name from another music legend) refigures the history of an art form as flexible and negotiable. Here jazz is subject to the same whims of taste and personal pleasure that make the music itself bad, good, or great.

Kelly Richardson's computer-generated videos and photographic works serve to obscure the boundaries between fantasy and reality. Often taking the form of landscapes, the artist's presentations—containing combinations of real and constructed imagery—are symbolic of the multiple realities we perceive when we engage contemporary media culture.

For her Artpace exhibition, *Leviathan*, Kelly Richardson created a high-definition, triple-channel video installation based on the cypress forest of Caddo Lake along the Texas-Louisiana border. She was drawn to the melancholic landscape of Uncertain, Texas, because of its iconic swamp, arguably one of the most foreboding natural settings in the state. Her works often feature unpopulated environments filmed on location, which she color grades or digitally "paints" using the most up-to-date computer software.



Devon Dikeou, *Cowboys Ain't Easy and They're Harder to Hold, They'd Rather Give You a Song Than Diamonds or Gold*, 2011. Installation detail. Photo by Todd Johnson



Kelly Richardson, *Leviathan*, 2011. Installation view. Photo by Todd Johnson

Similar in format and concept to her 2010 installation, *The Erudition*, *Leviathan* blurs the line between fantasy and reality through the placement of eerie glowing elements in a realistic landscape. In this nearly monochromatic work, yellow veins of artificial light swirl independently from the ripples visible on the water's surface, alluding to some creature or energy below.

Richardson is a lover of movies—especially science fiction and horror—and her work relates to prevalent themes found throughout the past decade of cinema. Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic movies such as *28 Days Later*, *The Road*, and *Wall-E* feature settings devastated by some form of natural or unnatural disaster. Similarly, *The Erudition* and *Leviathan* express anxiousness that is grounded in dealing with the consequences of the continuing advancement of industry and technology on the natural world. The sinister and radioactive appearance of the light on the waters of Caddo Lake evokes recent environmental disasters where healthy aquatic environments are endangered through the mishaps of humans.

The murky water in Richardson's installation pulsates with unnatural, undulating light that is mesmerizing. Much like the British sublime painters who marveled at the uncontrollable greatness of the open landscape, viewers can meditate in the ominous, manufactured setting of *Leviathan*.

—Alexander Freeman, *Education Curator*, and Elliot Reichert, *Curatorial Intern*

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