

Liberty, Megan N., "Explosive Watercolors and Collages, Subtly Contained", HYPERALLERGIC, 3 March 2015.

# HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

## Explosive Watercolors and Collages, Subtly Contained

Looking at [Marcia Kure's](#) watercolors and collages, the word that comes to mind is "torque": "the twisting or rotary force in a piece of mechanism (as a measurable quantity); the moment of a system of forces producing rotation." Although Kure's organic forms have little to do with any "mechanisms," they vibrate on the page, emitting a rotating force.

Kure's solo exhibition, titled [Grey](#), is her third with the [Susan Inglett Gallery](#). It includes several groups of works on paper: the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* watercolors, her ethnographic collages, and *The Grey Series*, each imbued with an impressive forceful energy, especially for works on paper of such a small and intimate size.

In works such as "Invasion of the Body Snatchers I. The Series: Amen, Amen, Amen" and "Invasion of the Body Snatchers V. The Series: Unicorn," splatters of earth-tone paints radiate from abstract bodies, each drop energized by glittering flecks of pigment. The terracotta sculptures displayed alongside them, which share the same color palette, are instilled with a similar physical energy, retaining the deep impressions of the fingers that molded them. These sculptures feel violent as they climb upward, as with "Serpentine," and at times tumble over and spill outward, as with "Hematite of Ishmael" — which is easy to miss, tucked under the window of the gallery near the reception desk.



Across from the *Body Snatchers* series hangs a group of ethnographic collages that join together ancient sculptures, bees, and birds covered in feathers. Unlike the outward force of the watercolors, the collages pull inward as the various wings and flaps point the viewer's focus to the central figurative element, the

majority of which are partly obstructed African women. From the bottom left of “Ethnographia XII: Bird III,” a bird flies into the image while the wings of another bird in the top right point upwards out of the center. With the same decisiveness required to place such forceful marks in her paintings, Kure manages to draw in a variety of imagery, while still maintaining a balanced minimalism, making equal use of the white of the page and the collage fragments.



Kure’s watercolor *Grey Series* hangs alongside the collages. At first these works seem strikingly simple and loose against the sharp precision of the *Body Snatchers* and ethnographic works. But it is exactly this loose quality that makes them a fitting contrast, highlighting the diversity of Kure’s mark-making abilities. While some, such as “The Grey Series IX,” have moments of energetic splatter reminiscent of the *Body Snatchers*, for the most part, Kure allows the water to run, causing bleeding colors and murky mixings, as in “The Grey Series X.”

A poem Kure wrote for the small exhibition catalogue offers insight into how her more visually frenetic works might relate to the poetic stillness of the grey watercolors. Though her paintings and collages are not overtly political, her writing much more directly addresses contemporary issues. The poem, titled “Grey,” is only four short stanzas with one final overhanging word. She includes politically charged lines such as: “Breathe / Ferguson’s midnight smoke” and “Tweet / We are all Charlie, Ismail, Isaac.” She immediately situates her work in the midst of the current political whirlwind. Nigerian-born Kure does not shy away from racially charged subject matter. However, she avoids simple meaning, her final words stating, “nothing / Is black or white / Grey.” The works themselves inhabit a grey space, emitting a torque while remaining beautiful, elegant, and two-dimensional. As her poem suggests, Kure’s work oscillates between forceful, out-of-control rotating energy and balanced rationale.