



Review

Jane Rosen

The Mei Mei Series

Sears Peyton Gallery

New York City

As a relative newcomer to the New York art world, I am not familiar with Jane Rosen's long career as a successful artist, but her work resonates with deep thoughts and her skills level, combining figurative and abstract modes, is extraordinary. The Mei Mei Series is dedicated to the artist's beloved dog Mayo, and, according to the artist, the word Mei Mei means little sister in Chinese and old lady in French. The entire series is a meditation on life cycles in animals, and these also symbolically represent humans, spirit worlds, and modes of consciousness.

The lifelike yet ethereal drawings and sculpture are clouded by a kind of cosmic pathos. *Mei Mei's Buddhis* are six animal spirits poised against the stark white gallery wall just above viewers' heads. Buddhi is a coined word co-joining buddhas and buddies. Each has its own distinctive materials and finish. *Deer Girl* has many layers. One doesn't know what's inside her. The outer body is a kind of translucent glass through which a mottled, marbled dark and white pattern is pronounced in the torso area, yet this pattern elongates and fades in the limbs. The animal torso has no signs of gender. The arms and legs are narrow wands with small stubby ends. The head and shoulders have a white-grey opaque skin that emits subtle sparkles. The deer head has an almost-invisible mouth, a dark nub nose, big pointed ears, and grey eyes full of mystery. *Deer Girl* casts a double shadow on both sides of the wall. Her face seems alert and her body is inert. "Deer" may also be a pun on "dear." The work's transparency and intimacy engross the viewer. Three Buddhis have willow branches inside that show only at their lower ends where the branches form a sort of stem or base.

Branches also appear and rise from a series of hooves, each titled: *Cloven Hoof*, *Maya Hoof*, *TK Cash*, and *Josh Foot*. These one-footed sculptures seem to re-member particular horses or animals with sturdy feet from which bundled willow branches now rise. The willows serve as conductors of the animal spirits they seem to represent – slender stems that become smaller and smaller.

Standing guard near the gallery door are five limestone birds on varied small pedestals. Each is roughly carved to show their distinctive postures, breasts, heads, and beaks; tool marks, furrows, and gouges suggest age and the ravages of life. *Bird Man*, 2007 from the back looks like a figure with bent head praying. *Osprey*, 2007 stands on the tallest base, of Chinese sandstone, and its markings and distinctive grooves add to its surface appeal. This bird and *Egyptian Falcon* have some greenish hues; all of the birds have some surfaces worked with dark ink or pigment.

Rosen's beautiful drawings give more attention to animal features. *Many Days*, 2007 is multiple life drawings of her beloved dog. *Split Second*, 2007 is a cloudy image of a two-headed deer in front of two square, intricate grids – the footprints of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. In this way, it becomes obvious that everything Rosen does is anthropomorphic – she uses nature, animals, and culture and sometimes intermixes them to variously suggest lessons that humans need to learn from the animal and vegetable worlds. The artist's website is www.janerosen.com. --- Jan Garden Castro