

Stacey Steers



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## Stacey Steers: Night Hunter

By M. Rebekah Otto  
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Experimental animator Stacey Steers currently has work on view in *Night Hunter* at Catharine Clark Gallery. The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Night Hunter House* (2011), an imposing black Victorian dollhouse. Through small windows, the viewer may glimpse 10 small rooms filled alternately with artifacts of domesticity (a single nylon drying on a rack) and eerie surreal snakes with foreboding eggs. The rooms also contain small screens that show excerpts of the film *Night Hunter* (2011), a collaged video starring Lillian Gish, the proto-ingénue of silent films. Gish is by turns the heroine and the damsel of *Night Hunter*, a delicate film that juxtaposes the “real” filmed world of Gish with an animated one. The simplistic animation and collage techniques illuminate the textures of grainy black and white film, creating a world that is stranger and more complex than either medium alone. Gish becomes Alice in a darker wonderland.

Also on view is Steers' 2006 work *Phantom Canyon*, which similarly borrows archival images, in this example from Eadweard Muybridge's seminal *Human and Animal Locomotion* (1887). As in *Night Hunter* the animal and human worlds collide and intersect. Muybridge's figures now inhabit Steers' dreamscape where they transform into bats and fish in a romantic romp with an opaque narrative. The film is shown in a screening room and stills are arranged on the wall of the gallery.

In a work of ornate animation, the viewer easily forgets that each frame and second of the video consists of individual collages. Luckily in this exhibition the gallery also features collages and stills from the films, which help the viewer comprehend the complexity of this craft.

As Faye Hirsch noted in *Art in America*, “Home is where the heart jumps into the throat. This could well be the motto of the oneiric animation *Night Hunter*”<sup>1</sup> Here fear and domesticity make easy

bedfellows, from the detailed dollhouse of Night Hunter House to the tumbling beds in Phantom Canyon. Unlike Gish's films and many portrayals of fear, the tension in Steers' work rises and never subsides. In these worlds, catharsis never comes.

Notes

1. Faye Hirsch, "Cut! Stacey Steers Animates Old Hollywood," July 27, 2011, Art in America [http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/news/stacey-steers-denver-art-museum/Night Hunter House](http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/news/stacey-steers-denver-art-museum/Night_Hunter_House).